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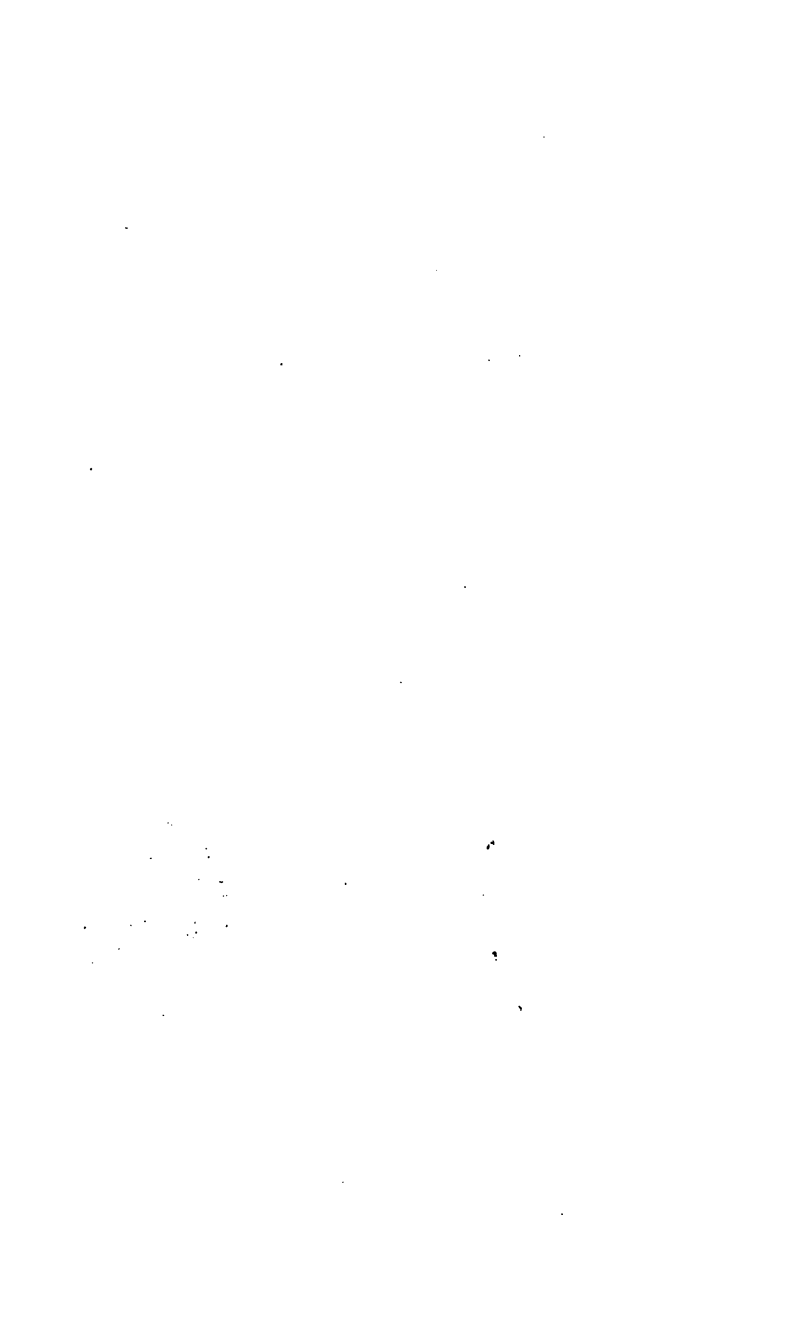
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ONWARD TO GOD:

OR,

THE SURE WAY TO THE CROWN.

BY THE
REV. SAMUEL WEIR.

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PREFACE.

THE Author has written on this all-important subject for the guidance and encouragement of young converts, especially those among the children of the poor. May He to whose glory it is dedicated accept this imperfect service, and bless it to the profit of many souls, for Jesus Christ's sake !

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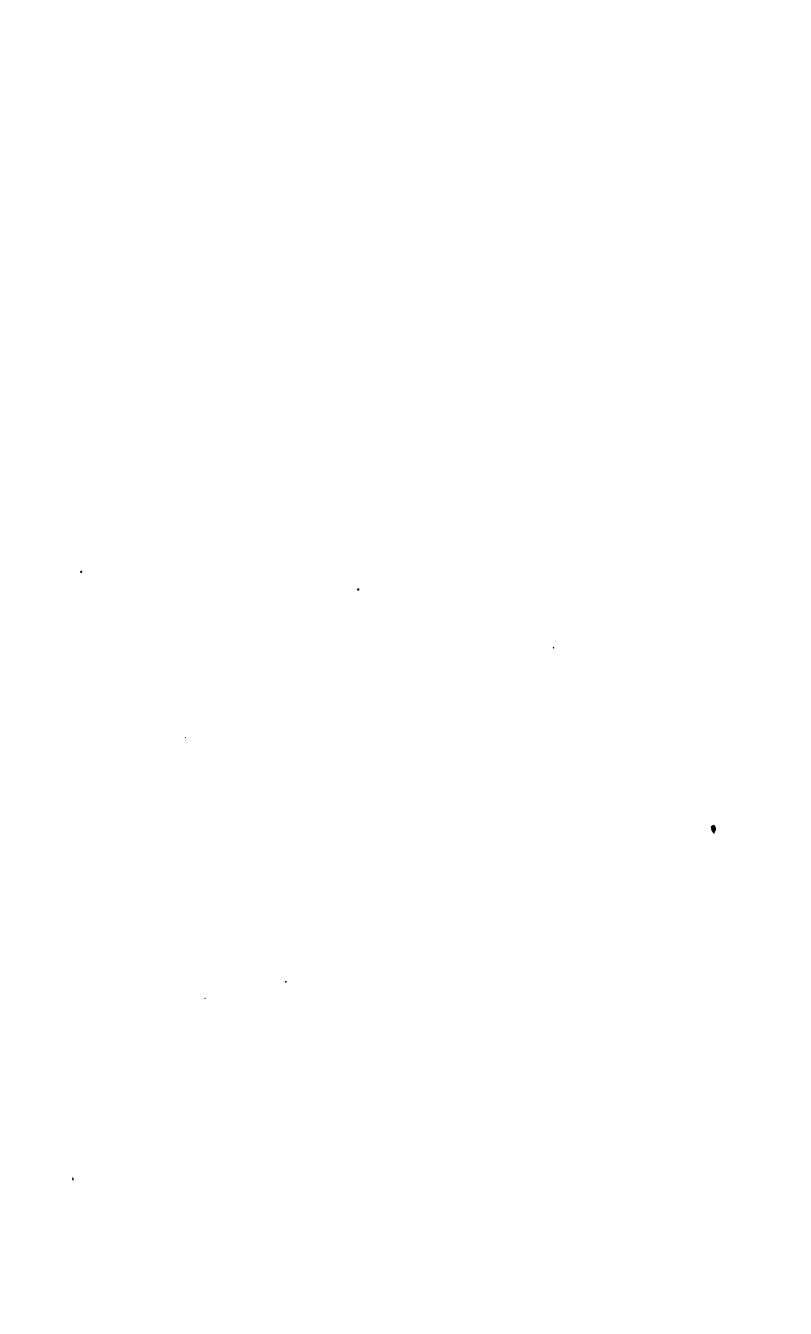
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ONWARD TO GOD.

INTRODUCTION.

It was a day of unutterable bliss when first you tasted the sweetness of the love of Jesus. Weary and heavy-laden, you hearkened to the Saviour's call; came to Him for relief; trusted Him with all your heart; and, as the blessed result, obtained the rest which He promises to bestow.

You remember, with gratitude to God, the heaven which was opened in your heart; how your soul rejoiced in the joy of your risen Lord, until the face of creation seemed to be covered with smiles. No dark clouds appeared in your bright sky, no fearful foreboding of ill disturbed your rest; for you thought that your mountain was strong, that you would never again be moved.

Your opinions of temptation and of yourself have since undergone a change. You have come by experience to know that your watchful and subtle foes are seeking every moment to draw you

from Christ, and lead you to eternal death ; and that, far from being able to resist them in your own strength, you are helpless as a worm. You have frequently thought of the many trials of a Christian, of the dangers which lie between you and your heavenly home ; and, though you long to behold Him "whom, having not seen," you "love," your mind is disturbed by the fear that this blessedness will never be yours.

But "fear not, O worm Jacob," is the language of Jesus to your soul. "Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward ;' and know for your encouragement and joy that, while you are faithful to My grace, 'I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee.' You will daily experience that 'My grace is sufficient for thee ;' for 'I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.'"

No more, then, be faint and weary ; no more let your hands hang down, or your knees be feeble ; for, according to the word of the Lord, "He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." Yea, Himself will be your "refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble ;" and as He who covers you with the shadow of His wing, whose love is without measure and without end, whose eye is upon you, and whose

ear is open to your prayer, is the Almighty One, "who is he that shall harm you, if you be" a follower "of that which is good?"

You will perceive, however, by the teaching of Divine truth, that duty and safety always go hand in hand; and, consequently, that he who desires to be eternally secure must walk in the ways of the Lord. Thus it is written, "An highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called *The way of holiness*; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein. *No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon*, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: and the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." (Isa. xxxv. 8—10.) Such is the way to the glory which awaits the faithful: but we have yet to inquire what are the stages of this way, and how we are required to advance.

And where shall we go to learn such things as these but to the unerring word of the Lord? . Where shall we see them, without any fear of being deceived, but in the light of Divine truth?

In the Inspired Volume all has been made plain: the various gradations of the Christian life

have been marked, and the spirit which the traveller must maintain has been carefully noted. St. Peter, in his Second Epistle, i. 5—7, describes them thus : “Beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue ; and to virtue knowledge ; and to knowledge temperance ; and to temperance patience ; and to patience godliness ; and to godliness brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kindness charity.”

Praying the Spirit of Truth to guide us into all truth, let us carefully examine the whole. We shall first direct our thoughts to the zeal with which you should pursue the all-important work of your life ; and then advance through the various gradations of the way, until we come to the glorious end, the pilgrim’s abundant entrance into his eternal home.

CHAPTER I.

"Giving all Diligence."

THE exhortation of the apostle impresses our minds with the fact, that nothing but wholeheartedness will do in the service of Jesus Christ. Yet there are some who appear to suppose that they may depart from their "first love," may lose their zeal, and yet retain the favour of God.

In their temporal affairs such people are sufficiently earnest. When their own or their children's need calls for diligent labour from morning even to night, when the competition of others in trade urges them to do their best, they apply their powers of body and mind to the task. And is "the meat which perisheth" more to be desired and sought than "that which endureth to everlasting life?" and is there no just reason to fear, that the glory which we desire may for ever be lost to our souls?

What is the preservation of the body from hunger or cold, from pain, or from death itself, com-

pared with the salvation of the soul from the eternal torment of the damned? What are the comforts which man can hope to enjoy in the possession of earthly good, what are the fleeting and unsatisfying pleasures of earth, when compared with a heaven of love, and "the glory which" is to "be revealed?"

Here, as they travel the pilgrim-journey of life, the faithful are cheered with a foretaste of heavenly joys. Here they rejoice in the well-grounded hope of seeing their Redeemer as He is, of joining in His praise, and sharing in His joy. Here, beneath a bright sky, wherein not a cloud arises to hide their Saviour's face, they advance with singing to their home; while faithless and fearful souls, who once, perhaps, bade fair for a life of devotedness to God, through negligence are become faint in their minds, and are unwilling and unable to advance. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." (Isaiah xl. 30, 31.)

"So run that you may obtain;" for—though "the race is not to the swift," who neglect to comply with the rules of the Christian course—

every nerve must be braced, and every muscle be strained, if at last you would receive the crown. Picture to yourself the racers in the Olympic games. There was but one crown to be gained, and many were the competitors for the prize. They looked not to the right or the left ; but, cheered by the plaudits of friends, and by the knowledge that loved ones were near, they nobly pressed forward to the goal.

It is somewhat different with us ; for all who engage in the race, and endure to the end, will attain "the glory of God." But you may lose your reward, and another may receive it ; or by faithfulness now you may add to your glory above. "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." (Rev. iii. 11.)

"This one thing I do,"—it is the one great business of my life,—is the language of the devoted St. Paul ; "forgetting those things which are behind," never permitting the good which I enjoy to lead me to supineness, nor the many shortcomings of the past to deter me from trying again ; "and reaching forth unto those things which are before," the grace and the glory which it is yet my privilege to receive ; "I press toward the mark," through every opposition in the way, "for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Philip. iii. 13, 14.) Observe, he kept his eye upon the

crown. "He had respect unto the recompense of the reward;" he walked not by sight, but by faith; and, hence, was enabled to count all things but loss for the "excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord," to submit joyfully to the loss of all things, and even to count them but "dung" that he might "win Christ."

In like manner, we also must look steadily at the things which are not seen, especially keeping our minds fixed on "Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith." We must "consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest" we "be wearied and faint in" our "minds." "For the joy that was set before Him" He "endured the cross, despising the shame" of the death on the accursed tree. He was well aware of all He must endure if He came to dwell upon the earth. He knew to what shame and pain He would be put by ungodly men; but, for the joy which awaited the end of His wondrous work, He veiled His glory, and, having become man, humbled Himself yet more, even to the death of the cross. Hungry and weary He sat upon Jacob's well, and His disciples besought Him to partake of food. But, as if forgetful of the wants of the flesh,—for His mind was absorbed in the one great work of His life,—the Saviour answered them thus, "My

meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." (John iv. 34.)

And what was this work of God? and what was the joy which awaited the Redeemer of man? It was the great and momentous work of seeking and saving the lost; and it was the joy of bringing many to glory, of raising them from their low estate to be "kings and priests" unto God. He saw *you*, when you needed His grace, as if there were not another to be saved. He saw you in your sins and blood, He pitied your helpless state, and died that you might live in Himself the life of the truly blessed. And will His love not constrain you to entire devotedness in doing and suffering His will? With the example of His wondrous zeal before your eyes, will you, by yielding to half-heartedness, fail, and be banished for ever from the Lord? The thought of it is grievous to your soul; for in your bosom is glowing the flame of His sacred love. It sweetly constrains you, it leads you earnestly to say,

"If so poor a worm as I
 May to Thy great glory live,
 All my actions sanctify,
 All my words and thoughts receive;
 Claim me for Thy service, claim
 All I have, and all I am."

You are firmly resolved to live to the glory of Him who has bought you with His own blood. You desire to enjoy for ever His favour, which is "better than life." But His approving smile, and the testimony that we please Him, can be enjoyed only while our life is conformed to His holy and perfect law ; and as holiness of life depends for its existence on the right state of the heart, it is essentially necessary that we obey the all-important command, "Keep thy heart with all diligence ; for out of it are the issues of life." (Prov. iv. 23.)

There, even in the heart, is every scene of the life rehearsed before it appears to men ; and there, by unholy thoughts, is the foundation of piety sapped, so that at the first fierce assault of the enemy the whole superstructure falls, and becomes in its ruins a place where the devil reigns. To drop the figure, and to make use of the words of Bishop Butler, when in his "Analogy" he speaks of the tendency of our nature to what is wrong, "the least voluntary indulgence in forbidden circumstances, though but in thought, increases this wrong tendency, and may increase it further, till peculiar conjunctures perhaps conspiring, it becomes effect ; and danger of deviating from right ends in actual deviation from it." "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he

fall." (1 Cor. x. 12.) When the Saxons under Alfred had fled to their forests for refuge from their conquering invaders, the Danes, no longer in fear of an assault from an overpowering force, surrendered themselves to indulgence. But in the hour of their unwatchfulness, Alfred, with a small but chosen band, came suddenly upon them, and regained possession of his throne. A moment's unwatchfulness on our part, and the spirit who was cast out may, with seven more wicked than himself, re-enter and possess our hearts. Under the ministry of Gideon Ouseley, a lovely youth, heir to a large estate, was brought to a knowledge of the Lord. Immediately after his conversion, he united himself to the people whom he now loved, and regularly met in one of their classes, his subsequent walk bearing convincing testimony that he had become a devoted follower of Jesus. His father, an ungodly man, was unable to understand the strictness of his holy life, and resolved to make him live like the rest in the Christless home. After many inducements he prevailed upon his son to go to a ball ; who from the moment he consented to go, and entered on the excitements of the scene, turned his back on the Lord, and ran faster in sin than his father expected or wished. Being handsome and rich, he gave full rein to the depraved desires of his

heart, and, by sweet and deceitful words, enticed many to ruin. But the vengeance of the Lord came at last. His property was squandered or lost ; his friends forsook him in his need ; and, as a homeless outcast, he had to beg for something to sustain life. Thus he continued to wander, filled with his own ways, until, as far as can be known, he perished in the midst of the wicked, and in the guilt and pollution of his soul. Will the living not lay this to heart ? While danger is near, and the alarm is sounding in our ears, is it ours to give our eyes to slumber, as if we were eternally secure ? " Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." (1 Cor. xvi. 13.) An enemy our inferior in strength would easily overcome us, if he found us slumbering on the field. But

" Angels your march oppose,
Who still in strength excel ;"

and, though greater is He who is for us than all they that are against us, yet none but the diligent Christian, who continues in watchfulness and prayer, will be kept by the power of God.

In no other way, than by unceasing devotedness to God, can the soul of a believer withstand the strong tide of corruption, and escape the sad fate of those who by its billows are borne to sin, to shame,

and to death. Go where we will, we meet with this sinfulness of man. In every clime, and in every grade of society, it has in all ages repeatedly broken through the barriers which have been raised against it, by human and Divine laws ; and, gathering strength when opposed, has bidden defiance to the resistance of the awakened but unsaved. And is this what a believer must resist, if he would reach at last the haven of eternal repose ? Must he breast the wild waves of sin, and, despite their opposition, succeed in reaching the shore ? Then, nothing but the power of grace can enable him thus to prevail ; and in no other way can this necessary grace be obtained than in the diligent use of the means. He must stir himself up to seek the Lord. He must live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved him, and gave Himself for him ; and then, though corruption may rage, and the billows of evil passions may threaten to engulf his soul, his cry to the Saviour for help will call forth His power and love ; and, at the sound of His "Peace, be still," the tempest will be hushed to a calm.

Well would it be for the child of God, if there were nothing in the visible church to damp the fervour of his zeal, or chill him to spiritual indifference ! When first he begins to live to God, he naturally seeks among the professed followers of

Christ an example worthy of his imitation, and encouragement to advance in the way. In his simplicity he supposes, that all who name the name of Jesus will rejoice in his change of life, and will help him by their sympathy and prayers. But many, alas ! have a name to live while they are dead. For years they have gone in and out with the faithful people of God, having the lamp of profession, but lacking the oil of love ; resting with complacency in the form of religion, while strangers to its power in the soul. These are they who would act in accordance with the words, "Be not righteous over much : why shouldest thou destroy thyself?" They are conformed to the world as much as they dare to be : they are without a particle of zeal ; for how can they be zealous who are dead ? They dislike devotedness of life ; and hence, when, in simplicity of heart, the young convert expects from them the help he so much needs, he meets with averted looks, and with cold hearts, and soon, if he is not on his guard, he is wholly turned aside from the way.

Watchfulness is needed. But who, in his "first love,"—especially if young in years,—would not be likely to lay watchfulness aside, when in the society of his brethren in the church ? He believes they are not enemies but friends ; and is,

therefore, most liable to lay open to them his confiding heart, and receive both them and their ways to its embrace. But, if he does, he is injured at once. If he fails to continue on his guard, and enters with freedom into the words and actions of the heartless professors whom he meets, he will find when he retires from their midst, that his zeal is not as great, nor his desires as strong, as before to live to the glory of God.

Nothing but "all diligence" will avail to prevent backsliding in heart. We must meet the cold-heartedness of men with the warmth of Christian love ; must awake to the importance of unceasing watchfulness and prayer ; and with all the powers of our souls must engage, and persevere, in the work.

Some will be ready to ask, "What is the necessity for this ? Is it not God who 'of His good pleasure works in' us 'to will and to do ?' Will not He, who has commenced the good work in us, perfect it unto the day of Jesus Christ ? and if we attempt to work out the salvation of our own souls, with that diligence which you have now described, would not this be salvation by works ?"

The answer to these questions is, "It is God who worketh in you," indeed, not only the desire, but also the power, to obey. Of His mercy He will accomplish in every *faithful* soul the work

which He has graciously begun : but unless that man uses the grace which he receives, by the using of which he can never merit that life which is wholly the gift of God, the gracious Saviour will in justice withdraw His grace, and leave him to perish in his sin. It is at once evident to every reflecting mind, that, if without the assistance, the continual assistance, of grace, we cannot obey God in the least, when by the aid of this grace we live to the glory of His name, our works of righteousness can have no merit in themselves, whereby we might claim the reward.

Now, man is without strength, is naturally as powerless for the performance of that which is good, as a dead body is for the various duties of life. Both are alike dead : the body without the soul ; and the soul without an indwelling God. But when God of His mercy quickens the dead soul ; when, at the voice of Him who is "the Resurrection and the Life," it awakes to spiritual life ; when "by grace" we "are saved through faith," and are created anew by the power of the Holy Ghost, it is "*unto good works*, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Eph. ii. 10.) For this the Redeemer "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, *zealous of good works*." (Titus ii. 14.)

And unless we continue in the faithful use of His grace, as "workers together with God," the work will be neglected, and the Holy Spirit be grieved. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." (Philip. ii. 12, 13.) "God's working is not mentioned as a reason why we should *not* work ourselves, but as an inducement to engage us in an earnest and diligent co-operation with Him. The meaning is, God exerts a certain influence upon our minds to produce a certain effect on us: that effect is 'to will,' that is, to choose, to be holy; 'to do,' that is, to perform holy actions. This effect *in* us is the end and purpose of His influence *upon* us. It is not God who wills and acts for us, but we who will and act ourselves under His influence. We see in this passage, then, what every young convert should very distinctly mark and constantly remember, the union of human activity and Divine agency. We can do nothing good for ourselves without God's grace working in us; and God's grace never works in us but to lead us to do that which is good, ourselves. We are not to sit down in indolent inactivity, waiting for God's grace to set us upon working; but are without delay to begin working in a spirit of dependence upon God's grace. The husbandman sows his seed in expectation of the

co-operation of the influences of the heavens: and so must the Christian go to his work. God's grace comes not upon the idle, but upon the diligent." *

The Lord beareth long with His own before He casts them off: but His Spirit will not always strive; and if, refusing to attend to His gentle admonitions, or to hearken to His warning voice, backsliders continue in their sin, He will "swear in His wrath that they shall not enter into His rest."

See in the words of the Redeemer to the Laodicean church the danger to which the lukewarm are exposed. "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, *I will spue thee out of My mouth.*" (Rev. iii. 14—16.) The same may be seen in His warning to the church at Ephesus. Their works and their labour were all known to the Lord. But He had somewhat against them, because they had left their "first love;" and, while His bowels of mercy yearned over their souls, He addressed them thus, with justice and mercy

* James's "Christian Progress."

combined : "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works ; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." (Rev. ii. 5.) And where is that church now ? Its glory has departed, according to the word of the Lord. Where once was the light of truth, scattering the darkness afar, and enabling the seeking soul to find the true path of peace, the darkness of error reigns, and the blood-bought are perishing in the gloom.

Haste, reader, haste ! for the work which you have to do is very great, and your time, at best, is but short.

"Time flies, death urges, knells call, Heaven invites,
Hell threatens : All exerts ; in effort, all ;
More than creation labours !—labours more !
And is there in creation, what, amidst
This tumult universal, wing'd despatch,
And ardent energy, supinely yawns !—
Man sleeps, and *man* alone ; and *man*, whose fate,
Fate irreversible, entire, extreme,
Endless, hair-hung, breeze-shaken, o'er the gulf
A moment trembles ; drops ! and *man*, for whom
All else is in alarm ; *man*, the sole cause
Of this surrounding storm ! and yet he sleeps,
As the storm rock'd to rest.—Throw *years* away ?
Throw *empires*, and be blameless. Moments seize ;
Heaven 's on their wing : a moment we may wish,
When worlds want wealth to buy."

Much, very much, depends upon prompt, and earnest, and persevering efforts for the glory of the Saviour's name. "Behold," saith He, "I come quickly; and my reward is with Me, to give every man *according as his work shall be.*" (Rev. xxii. 12.) "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." (2 Cor. ix. 6.) Now is the time for action; for he who begins at once will have the advantage of him who defers even for a day. Now is the time for action; for if your life be long, you will have the longer to sow for a rich harvest of glory; and if your life be short, its work will be fully done when your Master calls you away.

You may be young and strong, and there may be every prospect of your living for many years; but the day of life hastens to a close. Soon the lengthened shadows will appear, and the labourer will be called to enjoy his much-needed rest. Rouse yourself, then, to earnest effort now. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." (Eccles. ix. 10.)

CHAPTER II.

“Add to your Faith Virtue,” or, “Courage.”

IN the above words it is implied that you *have* faith, the faith which unites you to Christ. If the exhortation had been addressed to the unsaved, the apostle would have urged them to lay the foundation of faith on the Lord Jesus ; or, as St. Paul more fully expresses it, “the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God.” But the address is to the people of God ; not those who were once His people, but those who are now such ; not those who once believed on His name, but those who *now* have faith in Christ.

It may be well to examine whether you have this saving faith of the heart. If you have not, you may now be aroused to recover the grace which you have lost : but if you have, the careful examination of your heart will tend to confirm your confidence. Wherever it exists, it is a living, active principle, stirring up the soul to a life of progression in all that is lovely and good.

It cannot be inert and live. The believer must "go on to perfection," must grow in every holy principle and spiritual affection, or else faith, confined to her lonely dwelling in the soul, will sicken, and droop, and die.

Faith "*alone* justifies, but, as the old theologians were fond of saying, *not being alone*. Appropriating the sacrifice of Christ, it is the one thing which savingly unites us to Him; but in the heart and life of the justified man, it is not solitary, it does not build there a lonely hermitage. Faith is there rather, as Miriam was at the Red Sea, leading the exultant songs of her Hebrew sisters; and a whole troop comes up at her feet: and whilst at the bar of God's law, when righteousness is demanded, she answers alone, and her plea is but one word, 'CHRIST;' into the earthly church, and into the general assembly of heaven, she walks not unattended, but every other grace of the regenerate nature comes with her, bearing her train, and attesting her kingly descent." * To be more explicit on a subject of such great importance to the eternal well-being of man: Wherever saving faith abides, the heart feels its need of Jesus, its entire dependence on His blood, and trusts Him for the blessings of His grace.

* Dr. Williams's "Religious Progress" (slightly modified).

Wherever it is, it works by the love of God, and produces obedience to His will. It may be feeble, indeed, and small, even as a grain of mustard-seed ; but, if it is the genuine faith *of the heart*, it unites to Jesus, and brings His salvation to the soul. Inasmuch as by it we receive the Saviour, by it we receive also the right of being sons of God, and the witness—more or less clear—the witness of the Spirit Himself, that such is indeed the case. Then follows love ; for “we love Him because He first loved us.” It may be little as yet, because of the weakness of our faith ; but it is God’s own love in our hearts, and the proof that it is so is found in the power which it gives us to obey Him. Once we were helpless to do what we desired for God ; but now that we love Him, we feel that our hearts are enlarged, and that we are able to run in His ways : that, while continuing in watchfulness and prayer, and looking unto Jesus for His aid, we have strength sufficient for our day.

Have you now this saving faith ? Are you conscious that you need the Saviour ; and are you trusting in Him alone ? Have you even the least confidence that you are His, that God has made you His child ? Is His love shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost given unto you ? Observe that the question is—not, Do you love Him

as you ought, or with all your powers, with the love which, being perfect, casts out tormenting fear? but,—Can you appeal to the Searcher of hearts, as St. Peter did when he said, “Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee?” When temptation assails, being upon your guard, and calling upon Jesus in faith, do you find that you are able to prevail? If you do, then rejoice in the Lord; for you certainly have saving faith. How many soever your shortcomings have been, you are now united to Christ, and God now regards you as His own.

But see that you add *courage* to your faith. Rise to the dignity of your high calling of God in Christ Jesus, and surpass in heroism the greatest of earthly heroes. “It is easy to die in a battle-field; to confront death there. There earthly prizes are won,—stars, bright honours, are glittering amid that sulphurous smoke; there earthly passions are to be gratified,—my sister was wronged, my mother butchered, my little brother’s brains dashed out against the wall. I am a man, and could believe the story told of our countrymen; how each, having got a bloody lock of a murdered woman’s hair, sat down in awful, ominous silence, and, after counting the number that fell to each man’s lot, rose to swear by the great God of heaven, that for every hair they

would have a life. Amid such scenes, with passions boiling, vengeance calls for blood, hurling me, like a madman, on the edge of steel ; and where the shout of charging comrades cheers him on, the soldier is swept onward on blazing guns and bristling bayonets, in a whirlwind of wild excitement. But to lie pining in a dungeon, and never hear the sweet voice of human sympathy ; to groan and shriek upon the rack, where cowed and shaven murderers are as devoid of pity as the cold stone-walls around ; to suffer as our fathers did, when, calm and intrepid, they marched down that street to be hung up like dogs, for Christ's crown and kingdom, implies a higher courage, is a far nobler, manlier, holier thing.* "We boldly maintain that the greatest saint is the greatest hero ; that there is no earthly hero whose aims are so sublime, whose pursuits are so noble, whose principles are so elevated and so energetic, whose conquests are so difficult and so glorious, and whose exertions, sacrifices, and achievements imply so much real grandeur and magnanimity, as those of the man who, in the midst of a sinning, scornful, and hostile world, chooses God for his portion, and makes religion his business."†

Opportunities will not be wanting for putting

* Dr. Guthrie's "Inheritance of the Saints."

† Dr. Bunting's Sermons.

your courage to the test. Before the Master took leave of His sorrowing disciples, He solemnly warned them of what they might expect from men. "In the world," said He, "ye shall have tribulation : but be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world." (John xvi. 33.) "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own : but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." (John xv. 19.) "They shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake." (Luke xxi. 12.)

As the Saviour had said, so it came to pass. True, for a time the violence of man was restrained, while the Spirit was being poured on the church, and the followers of Jesus were being "rooted and grounded in love." But the storm was gathering, the dark clouds were lowering in the sky, and soon did both Stephen and St. James feel the relentless fury of the blast. Nor were they alone in sufferings for the name of Jesus ; for the church was scattered abroad. Deprived of their property and homes, they were forced to fly to the caves and dens of the earth, "being destitute, afflicted, and tormented." Those were the days which tried their attachment to Christ.

Enemies, hating the truth, used the most hellish means to compel them to renounce the faith. Death, in its most appalling forms, stared the disciples in the face ; and some, alas ! unmindful of the presence of Christ, forgetful of His power to save, blasphemed His most holy name, and succumbed to the power of the foe. Renouncing the only Saviour of man, they returned to Judaism. They "sinned wilfully after they had received the knowledge of the truth," and there remained for their apostate souls "no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." (Heb. x. 26, 27.)

The times have undergone a change. No longer are heard the yells of brutalized spectators, while lions are tearing, or fires are consuming, the hated people of God. We live in a country where liberty of conscience is enjoyed ; where, in the quiet of our sanctuary or home, we may worship in spirit and in truth. But as certainly as the devil is unchanged in his hatred of God and man, as certainly as he "worketh in the children of disobedience," "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Tim. iii. 12.)

The reason of this is plain, as set forth in the words of our Lord, "Every one that doeth evil

hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." (John iii. 20.) But "ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid." (Matt. v. 14.) The guilty voluntarily remain in the darkness of ignorance, the natural darkness of their minds; for they fear to be robbed of their peace. They would fain believe that they are "rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing," while they are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." In darkness respecting their real spiritual state, they say, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace; and they hate, and endeavour to extinguish, the light which would rob them of their pleasing dreams. When this light comes, even the light of a holy life, they are forced to behold the guilt and pollution of their souls, and to see how far they are short of the favour and image of God. Then it is that conscience awakes to the discharge of its most painful office. It lashes them with its terrible accusations, forcing on their souls a foretaste of the torments of the lost: and, while memory is busy with the past, recalling the slighted mercies of the Lord, and the neglected opportunities of grace, a voice, though but still and small, sounds like thunder in their ears,—*"Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy*

youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes : but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." (Eccles. xi. 9.) What is to be done ? Will they hearken and live ? Will they open their hearts to the light of Divine truth, till "godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of ?" or will they continue to hate and repel what makes them uneasy in their sins ? Too many, in the madness of their hearts, choose the latter course for themselves. They flee from the heart-searching word. They shun, for they dread, the place where it is faithfully proclaimed ; and, beholding, as they occasionally must, the holiness of the people of God, they would drive them as a plague from the earth.

Further, as already said, the godly cannot be hid. If holiness were a thing which could be concealed in the depths of the heart from the eyes of ungodly men ; if it did not, of necessity, manifest itself in all the actions of the life ; we might hope to escape unassailed. But, where love has its free course, it will surely appear in acts of benevolence to man ; and, unless it thus appears, it will soon cease to rise in the heart. "It is because there is a pressure constant and strong from the upper spring of grace, that we can draw any here below for the exercise of obedience ; but the covenant is

so ordered that, if we do not draw for the supply of actual effort, none will gravitate towards us from the fountain-head. If there were a turning, a movement, an effort, an expenditure, a need, a vacancy, at "the extremity below, there would be a flow of the Divine compassion to make up the want, and charge every vessel anew with fresh and full supply."*

There are some who, when they know the Lord, are fearful of persecution from the ungodly, and, to escape from it, they conform to the world as much as they consider to be safe : but vain is their hope of uniting the service of God with the adoption of worldly maxims, of conforming both to holiness and sin. So much are these things naturally opposed, "that the friendship of the world is enmity with God : whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." (James iv. 4.) The enemy of God, and yet continue in His grace ! In league with the foes of Christ, and yet in expectation of being crowned ! O, how vain the hope, and how great the infatuation, of the man who thus builds upon the sand !

We shall not, we cannot, be concealed, if faithful to the grace which we have received. As well might the sun, while he runs his appointed course, fail to give light and life to the worlds which re-

* Arnot's "Illustrations of the Proverbs."

quire his aid. He cannot but shine, his influence cannot but be felt : and, while Jesus's love is in our hearts, while His heavenly light illumines our whole minds, we shall shine, if obedient to His will, and the world will both see and feel the influence of our holy life.

Where then is he who would bury his talent, and presume to call Jesus "Lord"? who, yielding to fear, refuses to do what he can? Alas! there are many such. They refuse to make known that they have found,—the riches of grace. They know where the hungry soul may find the true bread of life; but, though their neighbours and friends, their parents or children, their brothers or sisters, are already dying of want, they refuse in their fear to make the glad tidings known. The Saviour has given them access to the throne of grace, and has promised to unloose their tongues, to grant them the Spirit's aid, to enable them to pray with power : but, when called on to pray in the church or with their family at home, they refuse to do the will of the Lord. They are silent in the class-meeting respecting any special communication of grace. "Fearing that they will lose what they have received," they take the surest way to such a loss; for they tell not the goodness which they have known.

Now, no matter what blessing is received,

whether pardon, or holiness itself, if we bury our talent, it will surely be taken away. "A few weeks ago," said a sister, when speaking in class, "I longed to have perfect love. I hungered and thirsted after righteousness, and I sought it with all my heart. I sought it by faith, and Jesus was faithful to His word. He cleansed me from all sin, He filled me with all the fulness of God, so that my cup ran over with love, with peace, and with joy. But I refused to tell you of His grace. I thought that I might lose it again; and concluded that it was better to conceal it for a time in my heart, till I should see if I could hold it fast. But God has been grieved with my fears, and my neglect of obedience to His word. He has taken the blessing away, and left me to mourn its loss. O that He would restore it again! for, warned by the past, I would no more refuse to obey."

Fearful as it is to have our talent taken away, this is not the only result of unfaithfulness in the service of God. Ourselves and our talents are wholly the property of the Lord. He grants us the privilege of possessing the gifts of His grace, that we may use them for the glory of His name; and if, through negligence or fear, we refuse to improve them thus, we shall feel the effects of His wrath.

We may be placed in the most trying circum-

stances. Our most inveterate foes may be those of our own house, or our lot may be cast among those fast sinking into eternal ruin; but, as grace can be obtained sufficient for our every need, in vain we shall seek an excuse for denying the Lord. His eye is upon us, He seeth our thoughts afar; and thus saith the Holy and Just One: "Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels." (Luke ix. 26.) There will be no possibility of escape; for, "behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen." (Rev. i. 7.) And "the *fearful*, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." (Rev. xxi. 8.)

Let us, then, put this question to our hearts, especially when we are tempted to fear the wrath of poor short-lived man: "Who among us" can "dwell with the devouring fire? who among us" can "dwell with everlasting burnings?" If we nobly confess Jesus, and brave the displeasure of those who are at enmity with Him, we may have

much, very much, to endure. Our property may be all destroyed, the friends whom we love may be torn for a time from our embrace, our life may be taken away ; but, after this, our enemies have no more that they can do. Our spirits, unhurt, shall ascend to the presence of God, to be crowned with the martyr's crown, and to tarry awhile till our loved ones will join us again, no more to be parted by death. But if, fearing the frown of man, we deny and forsake the Lord, who hath power to cast both soul and body into hell ; if, to escape inconvenience, or to avoid momentary pain, we "run upon the thick bosses of" the Almighty's "buckler" and brave His eternal wrath ; who will redeem us from death ? Our spirits, weighed down with remorse, must be driven from the light and the joy of His home, to the darkness and misery of hell ; from communion with angels and saints, yea, even with Jesus Himself, to dwell with the lost, and with the fiends who torment them in the flames.

Take another view of the case, one that more fully affects your present prospect in life. Perhaps, even while you read this, you are tempted to prove faithless to Christ, to break His most holy laws. Your employer has ordered you to do what you know to be wrong. You know he cannot bear to be opposed ; and you fear that, if you refuse to

obey, yourself and your children will be left without necessary food. O, tried one, where now is your faith? and where the remembrance of your vows to be valiant for God? Know you not, that to Him whom you promised to obey belong both the silver and gold, yea, “the cattle upon a thousand hills?” that His word is pledged to His own, and that His promise reads thus to each, “he shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure?” (Isaiah xxxiii. 16.) God is now directing your course, is calling you, as Abraham of old, to a sore trial of your faith. But how can you tell that the trial will be as great as your fears, if you are only obedient to His word? Was not Abraham saved from taking the life of his son, when the knife was raised to destroy? Was not Daniel delivered from the den? and the three Hebrew children from the flames? Then doubt not, but follow where He leads; for your Guide is the lover of your soul, and His “kingdom ruleth over all.”

“Give me the dauntless man,
Who flinches not from labour or fatigue,
But moves right on upon the path of duty.
God will stand by the man who boldly stands
By God’s command; God will give him energy
And courage *now*; and *afterwards*, success.”

CHAPTER III.

"And to Virtue Knowledge."

THE religion of Jesus dwarfs not the intellect of man. It strengthens and expands the mind which yields to its benign influence, and enables it with greater ease to pursue, grasp, and retain truths the most important and sublime. Far from giving the least countenance to the error, that the Gospel is opposed to any true science, our gracious Father in infinite condescension proves that the nations most honoured in the discoveries of science are those which are called "Christian."

Many would have it that "Ignorance is the handmaid of Piety;" but He who cannot err declares, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge;" (Hosea iv. 6;) and He commands us, by His servant St. Paul, "Be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men." (1 Cor. xiv. 20.) We wonder not, therefore, that we are exhorted to add *knowledge* to our courage and faith. Some have been unable to see any connection between

knowledge and virtue, taking the latter, as we do, in the sense of Christian courage. If, however, with an unprejudiced mind, we carefully examine the subject, the connection will at once appear.

Courage in itself is good, and is indispensable to the child of God; but, without knowledge to direct it aright, courage will become rashness, leading its possessor into danger, or, perhaps, to death. When a storm is raging, and the angry billows are breaking on the rock-bound shore, it may be courageous in a seaman to run his bark to the land, through a channel where dangers abound; but, if he refuses the aid of the knowledge which pilots possess, he hazards both property and life, and deserves to be punished.

When a breach is made in the walls of an enemy's fort, it is accounted courageous to advance in the forlorn hope, and many volunteer to go. The general rejoices to see the great bravery of his men; but he knows that brave hearts will not avail, if knowledge be wanting. He knows that his courageous troops may so rashly press on to the assault, as to be wholly exposed to the enemy's destructive fire, to which they might naturally succumb before they could reach the walls. Hence the well-ordered attack, in different quarters at once; perhaps, in the darkness of night; at least

with all the skill he can command, that victory may crown their wisely-directed courage with success.

Many, who are the saved of the Lord, have courage to confess Christ, and to labour for the rescue of souls ; but, for lack of knowledge, they injure not only themselves but the souls they desire to save. Some consider not at all the persons whom they address. They speak to the most careless of men, of the love, and joy, and peace, which it is the Christian's privilege to possess ; and on such grounds as the happiness of saints they urge the hardened sinner to repent. But their earnest entreaties are met with a laugh or a sneer, and often with personal abuse. No wonder that such an effort is in vain. Unmindful of the Saviour's words, and ignorant of the nature of man, these "cast their pearls before swine," who "trample them under their feet."

Or they are dealing, perhaps, with those who are not openly profane ; in whose hearts are germinating the seeds of Divine truth ; who have many deep convictions of sin ; who long to be saved, but yet hesitate to apply to the one only Saviour of men : for they fear, while they remember the number and aggravation of their sins. Their delay is construed into hardness and impenitence of heart ; and, instead of being treated with that

tenderness and love which are needed to draw them to Christ, they are attacked with the terrors of the law. Justice without mercy is shown as the certain avenger of crime. The sentence against the sinner is pronounced, and his punishment is minutely described; but the darkness is uncheered by a solitary ray of hope, until the transgressor sinks down in despair, or, with a heart more hardened than before, recklessly plunges into sin.

Or again, as is often the case, unable to explain the way of salvation by faith, to describe the nature and effects of the real, saving, faith of the heart, they in their zeal undertake to guide the inquirer to Christ. "Believe that you are saved, and you are saved," is the only direction which they give. And what is the result of their words? If the person whom they address is not only awakened to a sense of his sinful state, but also wise to discern the error which their words contain, he refuses to receive it to his hurt. A little reflection shows him the fallacy of the advice offered; but how to find out the pathway of genuine faith, is beyond the unaided powers of his mind. Hence, he remains as he is, struggling in vain against the master-passions of his soul, and in bondage to the fear of death, for days, for months, or for years; while his life, if he knew

the truth, might be a life of devotion to God, and of usefulness in the world and the church.

We have said, that ignorant teachers themselves suffer from their own lack of discernment. They are valiant for truth ; but, for want of knowledge, they stand when it is their duty to fly. They brave persecution, provoke the enmity of men, and expose themselves to suffering and death ; when, by following the directions of Christ, and seeking a refuge for a time, they might more fully glorify God. Souls are perishing in sin, and they pity and long to save them ; but in efforts of love they soon overtax their strength, and sink down in premature decay. They are lovely, perhaps, in the eyes of the simple in heart, and there is every prospect of abundant fruitfulness in their life ; but, wanting knowledge, they are wanting in stability of mind, and are in danger of falling away. Like many a green fir, they raise their heads amidst the beautiful trees of the field ; but, when the storm rages, and the strength of the strongest is tried, they are suddenly torn up by the roots, and become but as fuel for the flames.

If we would have stability of mind, it is necessary that we “grow in grace, and in *the knowledge* of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

Already we know Him in part ; but there are “deep things” of God which His Spirit is willing to

reveal ; and it is ours to seek, "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto" us "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him : the eyes of" our "understanding being enlightened ; that" we "may know" by experience "what is the hope of His calling," the holiness to which He has called us, and for which we hope, "and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints ;" how great the treasure of glory which He has graciously provided for His own.

In no other way can this blessed experience be obtained. For in whom does the Spirit continually and sensibly abide ? Is it in him who neglects, or in him who delights in, the study of the word of God ? Which will derive most nourishment from the river of life ? Which will maintain his profession of religion in unfading freshness ? Which will be fruitful in his season, and prosper in every doing of his life ? The Word itself will decide. "Blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord ; and in His law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season ; his leaf also shall not wither ; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." (Psalm i. 1—3.) His nourishment is not drawn from that excitement which passeth away.

He derives it from the knowledge of God, and of the precepts and promises of His word ; and, therefore, he has stability of mind, depth of Christian experience, and mighty influence for good.

The value of this all-important knowledge we cannot too highly estimate. "The mind of man has been formed for it ; it is that knowledge which most directly tends to ennoble and refine the mind, while it tranquillizes, delights, and satisfies it. It is the proper food of every spiritual affection ; it sustains and invigorates those emotions which connect us with God, and with the whole family of pure and happy beings. It animates us to duty ; and while it guides us in the paths of holiness and peace, it gives us a sacred pleasure in obeying the Divine will."*

In times such as these we need all the knowledge which we can obtain to detect the errors that are being taught. Satan has again changed his tactics. Whom he could not allure and destroy by the folly of heathenish rites, he enchained in the darkness of Papal Rome. And now he endeavours to lead those who abhor the dogmas and crimes of the Papacy to a worship of reason, and rejection of revelation and faith, or tries to ensnare them with a gospel which is pleasing to the flesh.

The better to accomplish his purpose, he not

* Rev. H. W. Williams.

seldom employs as his agents the well-meaning, but the yet untaught, and sends them far and wide through the earth. Artfully is the poison of sin compounded with the truths which they preach, so artfully indeed, that the agents themselves are unable to see wherein it lies : so they love it, and force it upon men, as the bread, the real bread, of life. Their respectable position obtains for them a hearing, their seeming disinterestedness strongly enforces their claim, their zeal wins its way to many unsuspecting hearts : and thus they advance, applauded by the rich and great, and upheld by the wicked to whom they speak words of peace, until thousands contend for sin, and Satan fast binds them as his prey. Surely, the days are evil,—days both of darkness and sin,—and nothing but wisdom from above can enable us to abide in the truth. But this wisdom can be obtained. The Lord has revealed His will for the guidance of the sons of men. His written revelation lies within the reach of all ; and so plain is its teaching of all which it concerns us to know, that none need mistake the way.

"The Bible ! That's the Book. The Book indeed,
The Book of books :
On which who looks,
As he should do aright, shall never need
Wish for a better light
To guide him in the night."

For the instruction of individual Christians, as well as of the whole church, we have "line upon line, precept upon precept;" and it is the will of God that we be *well acquainted* with the truths which His word contains. Hence the exhortation of St. Paul, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." (Col. iii. 16.) As if he had said, It is seeking a home within you. It is waiting to enter with all the riches it contains, that it may enlighten and enliven, sanctify and comfort, fill and govern your hearts. Let it enter and dwell: in your understanding, and memory, and affections, let it abide for ever. Make it the object of your daily converse and delight, that you may know it as a man his bosom friend; and use for the best of purposes, for the glory of the Giver of all good, the knowledge which you will thus obtain.

As, in all ages, an acquaintance with His revealed will was indispensably necessary for the safety and well-being of His people, the Lord commanded the Jews diligently to instruct their children in the words of His holy law, and this command they were not slow to obey. "Blindness in part is happened to Israel" now, on account of their rejection of the Messiah; but to the present they prize and retain the Old-Testament Scriptures, and write them upon their minds. A

Jewish convert, a truly converted man, asserted not long since in a public meeting, that when he was but four years of age—so well had his parents attended to the letter of the command of God—he was able to repeat from memory the whole of the Psalms, in Hebrew, and in two other languages. "Neither," said he, "is mine a solitary case ; for I am acquainted with Jewish Rabbis who can repeat their Bible *verbatim*, from first to last."

What then will be said to us, the professed followers of Christ, if, after all His love to us, His precious enduring words find not a dwelling in our hearts ? Constrained by His love, we should study them with the greatest care ; and, in order to know them aright, should implore the assistance of God. In vain we shall endeavour to see their peculiar beauty, and their tendency to promote our temporal and eternal good, if the beams of the Sun of Righteousness illumine not our naturally dark minds, and shine not on the sacred page. "Forasmuch as we see in nature, that when a hazy cloud rests upon the earth, every object which it envelops is indistinctly beheld, and appears in wrong form, and proportion, and colour before our eyes, which illusion can only be dispelled by the bright shining forth of the sun ; so we are obliged to confess that another and a simi-

lar shade may rest upon our mind, affecting its reasonings so far as they are formed from things which are without, which can likewise only be dissipated and destroyed by the illumination of Him who gave the mind its being." *

To the Lord, then, we must look, till the darkness, and mists, and clouds are dispelled by the brightness of His illuminations ; and till, all indistinctness being removed, we can see, as in the clear light of the sun in his noon-day glory, the things which belong to our peace. We can never look in vain,—thank God, we cannot,—while the trust of our longing hearts is in the merits of the atoning blood ; for we have the promise of aid, and of the unction of the Holy Spirit. He who inspired the prophets and apostles to write, is willing to enlighten us to understand. He is willing, as "the Spirit of truth," to guide us into all truth : but if curiosity alone, or a desire to contend with the vain or profane babblings of men, or a desire to know if His will is in accordance with our own, without a sincere purpose to follow His guidance if it should cross our inclinations ; if any or all of these lead us to ask counsel from the Lord, we need not expect His aid.

Strange as it may appear, there are those who, while their understanding and judgment are

* Barrett.

biassed by their affections, and while their minds are made up to walk in the way which is right in their *own* eyes, seek to know the will of the Lord. And wherefore do they seek to be taught? It is evident, from the fact of their minds being already made up, that they are not anxious to be directed aright. The reason, then, can only be this,—they want to be saved from the uneasiness or fear which might arise from the displeasure of God; and, therefore, as already said, they desire to know if His will is in accordance with their own, or, at least, if the Lord will allow them this one desire of their hearts.

Let us take an illustration of this, from the many which are found in the records of the militant church. A young woman who has given her heart to Christ, but who is in humble circumstances of life, is wooed by a respectable, well-to-do, young man, who has no concern for his soul. His warmth of heart, his gentleness of manner, and his comfortable position in life, are strong enforcements of his wish, and they leave an impression on the maiden's unguarded heart, until, her affections being gained, she wishes that it were right to be his. The word of her God plainly forbids her union with any one at enmity with Him; but she thinks that an exception might be made in this case, as she has hopes of winning her young

lover to Christ. Her eye ceases to be single, and darkness gathers over her soul, until she finally concludes that her choice would undoubtedly be right. She reasons thus,—that it is for the glory of God she takes such a solemn step ; that if she had not a prospect of doing good, she would not attempt it at all ; and that, therefore, it must be pleasing in His sight. Still she is uneasy in her mind ; for conscience is occasionally heard protesting against such a course : but its voice is becoming more and more feeble, until at last it is silenced for a time. She seeks to obtain light from the Lord ; but the light which she needs is withheld. She bargains with God, but she grieves His Spirit ; and, like Balaam of old, she is *permitted* to do as she wishes. But mark the terrible result. The husband, so moral before, becomes intemperate and immoral in his life. Her influence, which she thought would be great for his spiritual good, is unheeded, or, perhaps, despised ; and, though she may not turn aside from Jesus, to the ruin of her soul, she has a clog to that soul ever after. She, who might have run with joy in the path of peace, is weighed down with the sorrows of life, and creeps on with a snail's pace, till at last she is in mercy released, and taken where the weary have rest. The writer has already known two who have thus erred ; and, as he calls to remem-

brance the wrongs which they had to endure, the poverty, suffering, and shame which often depressed their hearts, he is reminded of the solemn words, "The way of transgressors is hard:"—"Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee ; know, therefore, and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that My fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts." (Jer. ii. 19.)

Sweet are the words of Jesus to those who would "keep His saying," at whatever sacrifice to themselves : "If any man will [i.e., if his *will* be to] do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." (John vii. 17.) "Endless life and endless death are written in full and glowing characters in the Book, sealed to unenlightened and unassisted man with seven seals." But "that book a Hand infinite and supreme unrolls to every humble, penitent, believing mind, and discloses to the enraptured view the page of eternity, on which things Divine and immortal are pencilled with sunbeams."* It pleases the Lord to work by the agency of man : but, if the lot of the sincere inquirer after truth were cast in some desert isle, far off from the haunts of men, rather than leave him in the darkness of ignorance, God

* Dwight.

would work a miracle of grace, and guide him into the way of peace. Never yet did His promise fail : never yet was it known that he who would *do* His will was left without the teaching of His grace. The Ethiopian eunuch, seeking for truth, endeavours in vain to understand the prophetic word : but help is speedily sent. Philip is directed to meet him as he journeys ; and, through the blessing of the Lord on his teaching, the eunuch is led to Jesus the Crucified, and finds peace with God.

A boy of about seventeen years had a deep impression on his mind that he should preach the Gospel of Christ. He was comparatively illiterate and poor, and was well aware that a work of such importance required preparation far beyond his power to make. Could it be that his desire to preach had come from the enemy of souls, not only to make him discontented in his present sphere, but that others might be led astray by the ignorance of his untaught mind ? He wished to settle this question beyond the shadow of a doubt ; for he feared to run before he was called. He took the whole matter to the Lord, and by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, made his requests known. He told his Heavenly Father how sincerely he desired to do His will, but how utterly unfit he was yet for preaching

His holy word : and while he vowed that, God helping him, he would never shrink from any duty to which he might be called for Christ, he asked in the name of Jesus, and in faith, that if his desire to preach was from the influence of the Holy Ghost, God would prepare him for His work, would open his way, and bless him in his labours of love. And the Lord granted his requests. A friend unexpectedly provided him with the necessary funds for the proper education of his mind ; and the Spirit of Jesus brought him to a state of rich spiritual experience, and to a right understanding of the truth. He was called of God to preach "the reconciling word ;" he was opposed by none who had any authority in the church ; and, wherever he went, he was received as an ambassador of Christ, and his labours were blessed to the salvation of souls.

See that you go and do likewise. There is work to be done, and the Spirit calls you to begin. Shrink not from the task assigned, however difficult it may be ; but continually acknowledge the Lord. Yea, "in all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." Just as in a pillar of a cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night, He went before His people Israel, so shall He guide you with His eye, till you enter His eternal rest.

CHAPTER IV.

“ And to Knowledge Temperance.”

WHILE Jesus was on earth, He taught His disciples, that nothing, however pleasing in itself, or however much to be desired by men, should be permitted to keep them from entire devotedness to God : that, if it were as dear to them as a right eye, or as useful as a right hand, the hindrance must at once be removed.

He who knoweth all things knew, that there were other than open foes to keep men from obedience to His laws ; that not only had the Christian to expect the fiercest persecutions which men or devils could devise, but had also to watch and pray against innumerable seductive influences. Most subtle are the enemies of our souls ; and, if they cannot by open violence prevail, they come in their most pleasing disguise, with smiles, and with honeyed words, with many professions of friendship, and of strong desire for our good. They would have us continue as we are, on the side of the Lord of hosts ; at least, so their words

imply : but they would have us abate our zeal, and relax our strictness for a time ; for why should we destroy ourselves ? No longer abstaining in part from the creatures which God hath made, we should do as the world does, enjoy ourselves as much as we can, and make us a name on the earth. To "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," appeals the most insinuating are made ; and many who nobly endured in the days when their raging foes violently attacked their faith, many who often repelled temptation to gross sin, have yielded to the pleasing decoy, and followed the tempter to death.

A father and son sit at their well-filled board, and wine is passed freely round. For the many infirmities of age the father requires the stimulant which wine contains ; but his heart is large, and he would not partake of it alone. The wine is shared with his son, who, being young and strong, requires not a stimulant at all. He is thus well accustomed to its taste. But little does that father, so cool and collected, think, how ardent is the temperament of his boy, or what a demon he invokes to destroy both his body and his soul, when he invites him to the deceitful cup. Day by day the youth takes what is as poison to his blood ; day by day the fetters of habit, which bind him, unsuspecting of ill, more strongly take

hold upon his soul, until he is branded with the drunkard's name, and his prospects are blasted for life. O, how many such wrecks of fame and of fortune are seen, as the result of intemperance ! Many a professor, many a zealous servant of God, forgetful of the adder's bite, and heedless of the serpent's sting, has "looked upon the wine when it was red," until, to the surprise and sorrow of all who admired him in the church, he has fallen into open sin. The pulpit itself has not been free from the inroads of this monster vice. Insidiously it has come in the garb of a true friend, caring, perhaps, for the health of the servant of God, until at last it has destroyed the health of his body, the vigour of his mind, and the life of God in his soul. "My young friend," said an elderly gentleman to a young minister whom he saw taking a glass of spirits, "let me offer you a word of advice respecting the use of liquors. There was a time when I was as acceptable a preacher as you may now be ; but, by too frequently accepting of the well-designed favours of my friends, I contracted a habit of drinking, so that now I never go to bed sober if I can get liquor. I am, indeed, just as miserable as a creature can be on this side of hell !" "He that taketh warning shall deliver his soul." (Ezek. xxxiii. 5.) Therefore "be not

drunk with wine, wherein is excess ; but be filled with the Spirit." (Eph. v. 18.) "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged" (weighed down) "with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so *that day* come upon you unawares." (Luke xxi. 34.)

You will observe, that our Saviour warns us as much against surfeiting, and the cares of this life, as against drunkenness itself. Now, there is something so disgusting in surfeiting the body with food, that one might suppose a Christian has no need to be solemnly warned against it. Such, however, is the tendency of the corrupt flesh, such the inherent weakness of the soul, and such the temptations in his way, that a Christian requires to watch against this form of intemperance. Many who are sincerely living to the glory of God seldom have an opportunity of partaking of delicacies in food. They are accustomed to few meals, and those of the coarsest kind ; and, hence, when enticements to eating are abundantly placed before them, there are great temptations to indulge themselves. Others, who are accustomed to the comforts as well as the necessities of life, are so pressed by their kind friends, that, unwilling to offend, they partake of more than the body requires. Soon the result is felt in a weight which oppresses the mind. If it is on the Lord's

day, they are wholly unable to enjoy the service of the sanctuary of God. It is as much as they can do to keep awake under the preaching of the word ; and their mind is so oppressed, that memory is unable to retain the important truths which they hear. They kneel with the rest to pray, and the spirit struggles to rise to its accustomed communion with God ; but the body retards her flight, and prevents her from the good she would : and he who unduly indulged his appetite goes home with a troubled heart, knowing that, by his own fault, the Sabbath has been worse than lost.

Nor is this all the evil which this intemperance brings in its train. Where there is natural delicacy of constitution, it increases the tendency to feebleness and languor, and, in some instances, thoroughly impairs the health ; and, where the body is healthful, and the power of digestion strong, it gives vigour to the subdued flesh, and enables it again to prevail. "Crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts," is the solemn admonition of the Word ; and it is at our peril if, refusing to obey, we nourish our most treacherous foe. Long, too long, it enslaved the immortal soul ; and now that, through the mercy of the Lord, and by the power of Jesus's grace, our enemy is beneath our feet, we must struggle till he

troubles us no more. "So fight I," said the apostle, "not as one that beateth the air : but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection : lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." (1 Cor. ix. 26, 27.)

As witnesses for Jesus, it is our duty and interest carefully to preserve our health.

If it is at all impaired, our spirits are at once depressed. We look upon the brightest prospects through a dark medium, and fancy approaching evil when there is none. "A cheerful heart paints the world as it finds it, like a sunny landscape ; the morbid mind depicts it like a sterile wilderness, pallid with thick vapours, and dark as the shadow of death. It is the mirror, in short, on which it is caught, which lends to the face of nature the aspect of its own turbulence or tranquillity."*

Further, if we are enfeebled and depressed, the merest trifles disturb us, and our words are so strange at times, that our hearers require charity to believe that they are spoken by any follower of Christ. And is this the way to bear a faithful testimony for Jesus ? to show to our fellow-men, that there is *that* in His religion which can command the respect of all, and *that* in His ways

* Heber.

which can make us at all times blessed ? Alas for the irritable ! how greatly are they hindered while endeavouring to win souls !

Let us trace this irritability to its source, and in nine cases out of ten we shall find that it has sprung from intemperance in food. Slowly but surely it has wrought us hurt, while we thought not that any harm would come of our moderate indulgence. Nature has been compelled to receive more than she required for her wants, until at last she has indignantly arisen, and demanded satisfaction for the wrong. We require to be self-possessed, and capable of judging things as they really are. We are to "rejoice evermore," that men may see in us the beauty of the religion of Christ ; and though none but God can give unto us "the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind," yet He has commanded us to use necessary means to retain and increase His gifts. Temperance is one of these means. It "is eminently promotive of cheerful, healthful piety. An unruffled and serene state of mind is one of the most common, as well as most happy, results of temperance ; as an opposite state of mind almost infallibly attends intemperate habits. The genuine calmness and self-possession of philosophy can never be enjoyed, except by him who refrains from unnatural stimulants of every kind, in food

as well as drink. Nor can the pious man, who indulges his appetite beyond the demands of unsophisticated nature, escape those morbid and irregular actions of mind, which now lift the feelings into the region of enthusiasm, and now sink them into the abyss of despondency. So irregular, indeed, will be the emotions of such a man, that he can never judge correctly of their nature, nor determine whether they result from the excitement of the animal constitution, or from the operations of grace and truth. Hope, therefore, will be feeble and unsteady; and his whole religious character will partake of the morbid irregularity of the physical powers, and want that healthful vigour and steady consistency which give to Christian example its greatest force. If that healthiness and vigour of piety are not exhibited by the temperate Christian, it will, in almost every case, be his own fault,—an unnecessary and self-inflicted calamity.”*

The cares of this life also weigh down the heart, and have need to be guarded against. True, while we are in the world, we must attend to the duties of life; and, while attending to these, must have a necessary and lawful care. The duties to be done may be so peculiar in themselves, that the mind must be busily engaged, and the attention concen-

* Hitchcock.

trated for a time. The wants of a rising family, and the competition in trade, may be so great as powerfully to tend to destructive anxiety ; but we must manfully struggle against it, and in the strength of Jesus prevail. Temperately we may labour, temperately take thought, for our own wants and those of our friends ; but neither labour nor thought must lead us to forget our souls. While “not slothful in business,” we must be “*fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.*” Whatsoever our hand findeth to do we must do it with our might, making our duties, however trivial they may appear, a sacrifice well-pleasing to God, through the merits of our great High Priest. To be “careful without care,” we must take all our cares to His throne. “In everything, by prayer, and supplication, with thanksgiving,” we must make our requests known to the Lord ; and His peace, “which passeth all understanding, shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Well would it be, if professors attended to the plain directions of His word, and temperately engaged in the various duties of life, taking only necessary forethought : but, little by little, they yield, till their thoughts are continually engrossed, those of one man in his farm, those of another in his merchandise ; and the all-important work of their life is crowded out. They have comforts in

abundance, with health to enjoy the gifts of their gracious Lord ; but they suffer anxious care to intrude, till it gains possession of their hearts, and robs them of their heavenly peace. What now are the blessings which they possess ? Through fear of the future, they cannot enjoy them in the least. They are worried and harassed, distracted from morning to night ; until, to escape from the misery which they feel, they dare to cut short their days, and rush into the torments of hell.

You may be placed, however, far above the fear of want. Riches in abundance may be yours ; and riches so secured, that there is scarcely a possibility of loss. The Giver of all good has raised you above thousands of your race, and intrusted to your hands a power which is mighty for good. But great is your responsibility in His sight, and numerous are the temptations in your way. There is a danger of forgetting that riches are the gift of the Lord, and that they are only confided to our care to use them for the glory of His name. There is a fearful possibility of forgetting the Giver in His gift, and of studying—not how we may best promote the interests of His kingdom, but—how we may please ourselves. And what if we yield ourselves up to the pleasures which wealth can procure ? What if we hearken with delight to the flattery of false friends, and use for

ourselves and them the talents which belong to God? Surely, retribution will come. The glory that we had will depart; and the riches which, if used aright, would have been as eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, and strength to the weak in heart, which would have given joy to the distressed soul, and brought rich consolation to ourselves, will quickly become our curse: so that, though worldlings may envy our lot, and sigh to be honoured as we, our misery through life will be a foretaste of the torments of the lost, and death will consign us to the unquenchable fire.

No wonder that St. Paul directed Timothy to warn the rich of the dangers which they have reason to fear. "Charge them," said he, "that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." (1 Tim. vi. 17-19.)

Whether it is the sobriety and industry which Christian principle induces, or a special blessing on all that he undertakes, or whether it is the combination of these which promotes his interests among men, one thing is sure, the Christian is

likely to be rich. Not indeed to have thousands of silver and gold ; but to have something over, after adequately providing for his wants. And what is to be done with this ? Shall this surplus-income be permitted to accumulate, till it becomes our most deadly snare ? Or shall we give all we can to God, temperately using for ourselves the bountiful gifts of His hand ? The latter is safest and best. This is the course which the venerable John Wesley pursued, through his long and eventful life, practically illustrating his own three valuable rules, "Gain all you can, save all you can, and give away all you can." "As to gold and silver," said he, "I count it dung and dross ; I trample it under my feet. I (yet not I, but the grace of God that is in me) esteem it just as the mire in the street. I desire it not ; I seek it not ; I only fear lest any of it should cleave to me, and I should not be able to shake it off before my spirit returns to God. It must indeed pass through my hands ; but I will take care (God being my helper) that the mammon of unrighteousness shall only pass through ; it shall not rest there. None of the accursed thing shall be found in my tents when the Lord calleth me hence. And hear ye this, all you who have discovered the treasures which I am to leave behind me. If I leave behind me ten pounds (above my debts, and

my books, or what may happen to be due on account of them,) you and all mankind bear witness against me, that I lived and died a thief and a robber."

Faithfully he kept his word, toiling for the glory of his Lord, until death came and called him away : and now, in the heaven where his treasure was so long laid up, he rests from the labours of life. His name is had in honour among men, and his influence for good is spread to the ends of the earth ; while the memory of those who intemperately lived for themselves is deservedly forgotten or despised.

See, then, that you live as a stranger and a pilgrim here, using the world as not abusing it ; for the fashion thereof passeth away. "Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world ; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." So shall you be established in the graces already received, and be fully prepared to go on to glory and to God.

CHAPTER V.

“And to Temperance Patience.”

THE ancient Romans were renowned for their temperance, and their patient endurance of the toil and hardships which they met on the march or in the field. Desirous to prove worthy of the valour of their fathers in the strife, they were accustomed from their youth to deny themselves of every pleasure which would unnerve them for the struggle with the foe, and to engage in such manly exercises as would develop their powers. The result was, that as early as the age of sixteen they were able to bear the various fatigues and hardships of a military life; and, once having girded on their armour, there was no place too rugged or arduous for them, no armed enemy too formidable: their ability and courage completely prevailed over all.

We, too, are called to “endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.” From the most exalted and honoured to the poorest servant of the Lord, all have to share in the hardships of the wilder-

ness-way ; all have to follow Christ through sufferings to that world where trial is unknown.

Though in many respects eminent among the apostles, and peculiarly honoured and blessed in his various labours, yet St. Paul had much to endure. His was not a bed of down for the repose of his often weary limbs ; his were not the comforts which worldlings so abundantly enjoy. "Of the Jews," said he, "five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep ; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren ; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." (2 Cor. xi. 24-27.) Neither was he alone in sufferings for the name of Christ : his brethren suffered as well ; and yet they nobly endured. "Even unto this present hour," said he, writing also to the Corinthians, "we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place ; and labour, working with our own hands." But "being reviled, we bless : being

persecuted, we suffer it : being defamed, we entreat." (1 Cor. iv. 11, 12.)

The battle-field is the same to us, as rugged and trying as of old ; the way to our home is still as strait. We cannot escape afflictions, and continue obedient to God : yea, we cannot avoid them even if we would ; for labour, and sickness, and pain are the sure portion of man. But as none but the victor will be crowned, as none but he who endures to the end will be saved, we "have need of patience, that, after" we "have done the will of God," we may "receive the promise."

By patience we mean that "gracious temper" which is "wrought in the heart of a believer by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is a disposition to suffer whatever pleases God, in the manner and for the time that pleases Him. We thereby hold the middle way, neither *despising* our sufferings, *making little* of them, passing over them lightly, as if they were owing to chance, or second causes ; nor, on the other hand, *affected too much, unnerved, dissolved, sinking, under them.*"*

It is no proof of impatience to wish to be exempt from pain. Our nature instinctively shrinks from suffering of every kind ; and this shrinking is consistent with patience, if we yield ourselves

* Wesley's Sermon "On Patience."

fully up to the gracious and unerring will of God. In that memorable hour of darkness, when the cup of intensest suffering was presented to our Redeemer, His human nature shrank from the bitter draught. "Sorrowful, even unto death," He "fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me : nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt." (Matt. xxvi. 38, 39.)

He who was absolutely perfect, and whose patience is a pattern for the sons of men, could not see anything in the cup of suffering, regarded *in itself*, which would lead Him to take pleasure in it. It was to the will of His Father that He so cheerfully and entirely yielded. And what was right in the Master cannot be wrong in us : we may shrink from pain, we may desire, if it be possible, that it might pass away, and yet be perfectly resigned to God.

Of the trials of life, as well as of death itself, we may truly say,—

"The cup goes round ;
And who so artful as to put it by ?"

We may be walking to-day in the bright sunshine of prosperity ; to-morrow, the dark clouds of adversity may hover around us. Our wealth may be great now ; we may have not only the

necessaries, but also the comforts, of life ; but soon, very soon, our riches may take to themselves wings and fly away, and we and our children may have scarcely a morsel of bread.

True it is, that God's promise of support can never fail : our "bread shall be given," our "waters shall be sure." But before the promised intervention takes place, before the messenger of God appears, there may be only a "handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse." Joy will again come, sorrow will flee away. But before we are permitted to rejoice in the light, we may have to walk through darkness for a time, seeing no prospect of deliverance, yet holding our shield of faith with a firmer grasp to screen us from the fiery darts of hell. When the pangs of hunger begin, when our children call, but in vain, even for a morsel of bread, when Satan tempts us to put forth our hand and steal, that we may save our beloved ones from death, it will be an hour of darkness, a time for the patience of the saint. And this hour may come. The Lord help us patiently to endure !

Poverty, with its attendant ills, is not all we may have to bear ; for we may have opposition from ungodly men. When, constrained by the love of Christ, we have their best interests at heart, when we are using for the promotion of their good our time and money, and the vigour of

body and mind, they may hinder us in our self-forgetting work. Even when restrained from openly persecuting us unto death, they may defame us if they can. They naturally judge of our motives by their own, and may brand us as selfish knaves. They may try to pervert our words; yea, to our face they may return evil for good, forgetting our kindness, despising our efforts of love, and reviling us for not doing more. Such ungrateful and base conduct will fully try the strength of our graces; but, if our temper be lost, we fail in our efforts for their good. If, forgetful of the dignity of our high and holy calling, and neglecting to watch unto prayer, we return their reproaches, or in look, or word, or tone show that we are angry, we grieve the Holy Spirit of God; we lose our spiritual strength; we disturb the heavenly quiet of our minds; and we bring a bad report on the blessed religion of Christ. We leave the impression on the minds of the lookers on, that there is nothing in religion, after all; that there is no power in the all-sufficient grace of the Lord, no beauty in the holiness which Christians profess; and they turn away, resolved to continue as they are.

Preserve, then, with care, the spiritual vigour which you enjoy. Show to the world that Jesus is mighty to save; that His grace is sufficient for

man in the greatest trials of life. Pity the perishing, and leave them not to perish in their sin ; but learn of Jesus, and in patience possess your soul. For "the servant of the Lord must not strive ; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves ; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth ; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will." (2 Tim. ii. 24—26.)

Perhaps you are ready to suppose, that, if you were saved from the society of the wicked, and placed among the children of God, blessed with communion with those in whose hearts there is perfect love, trials would no more be known. But such is the imperfection of the best on earth, that, even in their midst, your patience would be put to the test. Perfection in love to God, and to all mankind for His sake, restores not to man on earth the perfection which was before the fall. His understanding was then as a bright lamp, casting all necessary light on everything required to be known. The things which regarded the body and time, as well as the undying soul, the nature of everything of earth, with its proper adaptation to its end, the understanding of man could readily perceive. Memory could faithfully

retain the knowledge entrusted to its care ; and hence there were no mistakes, no false expectations, no disappointments from ignorance or unintentional neglect. Now, alas! everything is changed. The understanding has lost its strength, the power of perception is diminished, and the memory is treacherous ; the whole man fallen and depraved. Yea, and even when the soul is raised to the favour and image of God, innocent infirmities will remain as long as we abide in the flesh. The most perfect are liable to err in the judgment which they form of things, as well as in apprehending or retaining what they hear ; and hence there will arise improprieties in word and deed, which, though not sinful in themselves, will give full exercise to our graces. We may suppose our friend to be worthy of blame, when the fault was one beyond his power to avoid ; we may impute his error to rashness, heedlessness, or neglect of the things known ; we may even view his conduct as dictated by a wish to provoke or annoy : but, as certainly as we do, our patience will be sorely tried. It is ours not to hastily condemn ; for “we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.” (Rom. xv. 1.)

Often, with expectant heart, the servant of God goeth to his holy toil. He longs to see the kingdom of Christ established in the hearts of men.

Like Jesus, he weeps when he looks on the misery of guilty souls. He beholds them perishing in sin ; dead already, spiritually dead, and hastening to the death that never dies. It may be that he perceives among the enemies of God, among those who are obnoxious to His wrath, his relations or friends. His soul is moved within him at the sight. His bowels of mercy yearn over those who are near and dear to his heart, and he tries to save them from their sins. It has long been familiar to his mind, that the power of Satan is great. But in the ardour of his first love, and in his unwavering confidence in the power and love of Christ, he loses sight of the difficulties in the way, and commences his work in hope. He cannot see why he should be unable to convert the whole world to Christ, if he could only tell them of His love. Surely, every one that heard the glad tidings of Jesus's grace, and what wonders that grace hath wrought, would readily acknowledge and receive the Redeemer. He therefore labours with all his heart ; from morning to night, in season and out of season, he toils : but he is greatly disappointed in the result. For weeks, for months, or for years, his efforts with some are in vain ; the sinner continues in the love and the practice of his sin, refusing to be won by the preaching of a crucified Saviour. He who heark-

ened for a time, and bade fair for the glory of God, has again wandered from the way. As a dog to his vomit, as a sow to the mire, he has returned to the things impure ; and the tears which have been shed, the prayers that have been offered, and the efforts which have been put forth, appear to have been all in vain.

If there were only abiding fruit of our toil !—but to sow by the way-side, or on the barren rock, or in the place where the thorns grow ; to labour in faith, in accordance with the will of God, and yet not be permitted to behold the fruit of our labours : who is sufficient for this ? Thanks be to God, we are, by the aid of His strengthening grace. Reader, be patient in the field. Your business is to work and wait, with an eye to the glory of God : it is His to reward your toil. How can you tell but that the seed which you have sown, and which has been buried so long in the depths of the hard heart, is about to appear ? How can you tell what fruit your labours have produced ? what a wide-spreading influence they have had ? how, even in remote climes, they may be even yet contributing to the glory of God ? Your success may have been wisely concealed from you, to keep you from destructive pride, and to try the strength of your faith. One thing, however, is sure : “your labour is not in vain in the

Lord." "You water one who is ready to wither away; and although the precious stream seems to sink into the earth, it rises to heaven and hovers over you, and falls again upon yourself in refreshing dews." *

The Lord is not unmindful of your labours for the glory of His name. Not even the tears which you have shed are forgotten by your gracious Lord: and when He shall again appear in glory, and the world shall be assembled at His throne, He will render unto you according to your works. "To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life." (Rom. ii. 7.)

But, further, as children of God, we may expect afflictions from His hand. "If," says the apostle, "ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons;" plainly recognising it as an established rule, that afflictions are the portion of the saint.

The children of God may become remiss in the duty of private prayer; they may be so intent on the ordinary business of life, as to leave themselves little time for reading, or meditation, or the careful examination of their hearts. They may, forgetful of their covenant-vows, be in danger of

* Arnot's "Illustrations of the Proverbs."

inordinate affection for a dear earthly friend; of setting up an idol on the throne which belongs to God. Temptations will not be wanting to neglect or idolatry such as this; and, if we yield to the tempter, if we fall into his hidden snare, our souls may be eternally destroyed. We see not the danger, and in our ignorance we begin to err; but He who seeth the end from the beginning perceives the evil which threatens to destroy. He pities us, and would save us from death; and, though He would never unnecessarily inflict pain on even His most unworthy child, yet "for our profit" He gives us to feel the smartings of His chastening rod. We are prevented by sickness from attending to the business of life, that we may have time to consider our ways. The loved ones are taken away, and our hearts mourn their loss, that, when sorrow is weighing us down, we may turn to our Father for relief.

But it is hard—O, how hard!—for the soul of the afflicted one to bow in perfect resignation to His will. It is contrary to nature; and nothing but grace can prevail. When the heart is left in sadness alone; when our departed ones have been buried from our sight, and we return to our desolate home; when no more we hear, as in the past, the voice which was as music in our ears: it is hard in such darkness to see the hand of our

loving God, and to trust Him, yea, even unto death.

But bow in resignation, ye breaking hearts, that Jesus may heal you with His love. Sink not down in sadness or despair, but rise and be strong for Christ. Only a little longer endure ; for soon will the day dawn, and the darkness of the night of sorrow will flee away.

"Let us be patient ! these severe afflictions
Not from the ground arise ;
But oftentimes celestial benedictions
Assume this dark disguise.

"We see but dimly through the mists and vapours
Amid these earthly damps ;
What seem to us but sad funereal tapers
May be heaven's distant lamps."

M— B— was a poor but pious widow, in the town of W—. Her young husband had been suddenly removed by death ; and her youngest boy, born three months after his father's decease, had been crushed beneath a ponderous waggon-wheel : yet the widow clung to the widow's God, in the land in which she was a stranger. Near by her humble dwelling was the house of a lady who sometimes employed her, and whose servant-maid was living "without hope, and without God."

In vain the widow, pitying her perishing state, tried to speak to her about her soul: her opportunities for conversing with her were very few; and, few as they were, they were rendered fruitless by the indifference of the maid. But the widow despaired not of success. The more she was hindered, the more she pleaded with the Lord, that He would give her an opportunity of sowing the seed of truth in the young heart; and the Lord answered her prayer, in a way which was farthest from her thoughts.

Personal and prolonged affliction came. She was laid upon a sick-bed in her lonely home; and when there was little prospect of earthly friendship or relief, the lady already mentioned felt for her distress, *and, unsolicited, sent her maid to attend her.* Here was the opportunity so long and earnestly sought. Night after night the careless one sat by the bed of the suffering saint; and as she saw her resignation and holy joy, she was won to admire the beauty of holiness, and to desire to feel its power for herself. Faithfully the sufferer spoke to her of her perilous state. Wisely she directed her to the Lord Jesus for life, and exhorted her to trust Him for His grace, until, in answer to believing prayer, salvation came to her soul, and the widow rejoiced in her joy.

Whether others are benefited by our many

afflictions or not, they "all work together for" *our* "good." We love the Lord; and, as the promise of His word can never fail, He whose "kingdom ruleth over all," who, as He pleases, controls and directs all the events of life, will make our trials conduce to the profit of our souls. When He sends them, or permits them to come, He is near to support us with His grace, and to save us from suffering more than will accomplish the end. His eye is upon us, He feels for the anguish which we endure, and, while we bow to His will, He strengthens us with might to prevail, and prepares us for His holy abode.

Are you passing through trials now? and is it your strong desire to become holy in heart and life? Then see that you walk by faith. Rely fully on the mercy and love, the power and faithfulness, of God. "Despise not the chastenings" of His hand, suffer not a murmur to arise; but "let patience have her perfect work, that" you "may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." (James i. 4.)

"Leave to His sovereign sway
To choose and to command;
So shalt thou wondering own His way,
How wise, how strong His hand!"

You will find to your joy, that the various tri-

bulations of life will separate the chaff from the wheat, and fit you for the granary of God ; for tribulation will work patience in your soul, and patience will give you more fully than ever to know the Saviour and His saving grace. And when experience such as this is gained, when you see where your strength lies, and have an assured hope of the glory of God,—a hope that will never cover you with shame,—you will praise Him for the trials endured. “ Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.” (Heb. x. 37.) “ The time of our eternal redemption draweth nigh. Let us hold out a little longer, and all tears shall be wiped from our eyes, and we shall never sigh nor sorrow any more. And how soon shall we forget all we endured in this earthly tabernacle, when once we are clothed with that house which is from above ! We are now but on our journey towards home, and so must expect to struggle with many difficulties ; but it will not be long ere we come to our journey’s end, and that will make amends for all. We shall then be in a quiet and safe harbour, out of the reach of all storms and dangers. We shall then be at home in our Father’s house, no longer exposed to the inconveniences which, so long as we abide abroad in these tents, we are subject to. And let us not forfeit all this happiness for want of a little more

patience. Only let us hold out to the end, and we shall receive an abundant recompense for all the trouble and uneasiness of our passage, which shall be endless rest and peace."*

* Wesley's Sermon "On the Resurrection of the Dead."

CHAPTER VI.

“And to Patience Godliness.”


IN the Holy Scriptures, *godliness* signifies a devout state of heart towards God, together with the practical manifestation of that state in the outward life. More particularly, it implies the spiritual worship of God, a continual sense of His presence, a strong confidence in His power, faithfulness, and love, and a reverential awe of His holiness and justice. Now when these principles exist in the soul, they enable it patiently to endure. Hence, as, in the various trials of life, we require continual support, we are wisely directed to add godliness to the graces already mentioned; to continually remember, and to let the remembrance have its influence on our life, that God is with His people for good.

He has made us His children and heirs; our hearts are His loved abode; and all that is implied in almighty power, unerring wisdom, and boundless love, is exerted on our behalf. Thus saith the Lord: “If a man love Me, he will keep My

words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with him." (John xiv. 23.) "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour." (Isaiah xliii. 1—3.)

Let us remember, and believe in, these precious promises of God. Let us retain an abiding sense of His gracious presence with our souls, and it will give courage to our hearts, and enable us, not only to do, but to suffer, His blessed will.

The presence of Napoleon, or Wellington, on the field of battle with his troops, often aroused their enthusiasm, yea, incited them to deeds of valour which astonished both the world and themselves. And how can we account for the fact, that the presence of one man so powerfully influenced their minds? The reason was, that the blast of the trumpet of fame had borne to their ears the wisdom and might of their leader; and, having the greatest confidence in his ability, they were willing to follow him to victory or death. But if the presence of mortals can exert such an



influence on the minds of thousands of their race, shall not the presence of Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, inspire us to do or to suffer whatever His unerring wisdom shall direct? to follow where He leads, through good or through evil report, through floods, or through flames, to do battle for the Lord of hosts?

After all his victories, Napoleon was vanquished; but Jesus was never overcome. Mark how the foe took advantage of His time of weakness, when He had fasted forty days and forty nights: but, wielding the Spirit's sword, our Emmanuel put him to flight. Fierce was the struggle, again, when He knelt in Gethsemane, and when He hung upon the cross: but yet He gloriously prevailed. He "spoiled principalities and powers," and "made a show of them openly, triumphing over them;" (Col. ii. 15;) and, leading captivity captive, dragged, as it were, at His chariot, the conquered foe.

Exalted "a Prince and a Saviour," having "a Name above every name," and invested with "all power in heaven and in earth," He is yet with His followers on the field. Courage, brave soldier of the Cross! the presence of Jesus is with you, and He leads you to victory, not to death. The power of the Lord is in us, and the shout of a King is among us; yea, the prize is held out to

view, and Jesus Himself proclaims, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. ii. 10.)

Again, the consciousness of the holiness of Him who is ever near us will tend to preserve us from sin. If any fall, it is because they forget God. They lose sight of the awe-inspiring character of the Being who loves them: they retain not an abiding impression of His intense hatred to sin. They fear Him not with a holy, filial fear; and they fear not themselves,—their own weakness, and consequent liability to err. They think that their mountain is strong, that they will never again be moved; that they have strength sufficient to tamper with evil, yet remain unhurt; to gaze upon its seeming beauty, yet refuse to receive it to their embrace. But, alas! the tempter is too subtle, corruption too strong, for their unwary, unaided souls; and, in an evil hour, they fall into the power of the devil, who leads them captive at his will.

Can it be, if we walk in the recollection and belief, that our God, who is "glorious in holiness," dwelleth continually in our hearts, that the eye of Him before whose throne we must stand spieth out all our ways, that we shall indulge in things that are impure? "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in

reverence of all them that are about Him." (Psalm lxxxix. 7.) He has power to destroy both soul and body in hell: and if this were remembered more, we should have to complain less of our departures from the living God. Ready for the attacks of hell, we should exclaim, like Joseph, when time, and place, and circumstances combined to encourage crime, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" In a word, we should find that "the fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death." (Prov. xiv. 27.)

And not only by inspiring us with awe, but also by increasing our faith, His presence preserves us from sin. A Nebuchadnezzar may threaten God's children with the flames of a destroying furnace, and doom them to death if they refuse to obey his will; but, strong in their belief of the presence and power, the love and the faithfulness, of God, they will refuse to bow down to his image, and will answer, "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." (Dan. iii. 17, 18.)

Thus did the three Hebrew youths endure; and thus too did Daniel prevail, strong in his confi-

dence in God. “And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection.” (Heb. xi. 32—35.)

“Fear not; for Cæsar is on board,” were the daring words of Julius to the frightened seamen, while a storm raged, and the mighty billows threatened to engulf them.

“I fear not; for Christ is in me,” were, in substance, the words of Ignatius, when he stood in the presence of Trajan, with the prospect of a cruel death. When brought into the presence of this proud emperor of Rome, “the emperor addressed him, ‘What a wicked wretch art thou, thus to transgress our commands, and to persuade others also to do likewise, to their destruction!’ Ignatius answered, ‘No one ought to call Theophorus wicked, forasmuch as all evil spirits are departed from the servants of God. But if be-

cause I am a trouble to those wicked spirits, thou callest me wicked, I confess the charge; for *having within me Christ, the heavenly King*, I dissolve all the snares of the devil.' Trajan replied, 'And who is Theophorus?' Ignatius :—'*He who hath Christ in his breast.*' Trajan :—'And do not we seem to thee to have the gods within us, who fight for us against our enemies?' Ignatius :—'Ye err, in that ye call the evil spirits of the heathen, gods: for there is but one God, who made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that is in them; and one Jesus Christ, his only-begotten Son, whose kingdom may I enjoy.' Trajan :—'*His kingdom, you say, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate.*' Ignatius :—'His who crucified my sin, with the inventor of it; and has put all the deceit and malice of the devil under the feet of those *who carry Him in their heart.*' Trajan :—'Dost thou then carry Him that was crucified within thee?' Ignatius :—'I do; FOR IT IS WRITTEN, I WILL DWELL IN THEM, AND WALK IN THEM.' Then Trajan pronounced this sentence against him: 'Forasmuch as Ignatius hath confessed *that he carries within himself Him that was crucified*, we command that he be carried bound to the great Rome, there to be thrown to the lions, for the entertainment of the people.'" Noble and devoted follower of Jesus! He witnessed a good confes-

sion, and endured as seeing Him who is invisible, sustained in death, as in life, by the power of his in-dwelling God. It is impossible to sin, while we hold fast faith in Jesus ; and the stronger our faith, the greater is the ease with which we shall "quench the fiery darts of the wicked one." In "the evil day" we shall stand in the strength of grace ; and, "having done all," shall stand in the Saviour's presence with exceeding joy.

Is Jesus near ? Do we know He is almighty to save ? And shall we, while acknowledging the fact, cast our confidence away ? "God is our refuge and strength, *a very present help in trouble.* Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea ; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." (Psalm xli. 1—3.)

If man is alone in the various afflictions of life, conscious that he is forsaken by all, that he is left without sympathy and help, he will certainly perish in the gloom of his increasing despair.

Yet man may be thus alone, as well in the crowded city, in the midst of thousands, as in the desert wastes, the solitude of which is undisturbed. Homeless and friendless, without God

and without hope, the outcast from society may wander through the busy thoroughfares, unheeded by the passers by. His heart may be breaking with grief, yet he may not have one friendly ear into which to pour the tale of his distress; and at last in his loneliness, weighed down with oppressive care, or the load of his many sins, he may turn to death for relief. When the noise of the city is stilled, and only the echo is heard from the foot of the watchman going his lonely round, the sad one directs his steps to the river where it silently flows, and, seeking its embrace, finds torment instead of long-sought rest.

Nor is the outcast the only one alone. Many of the wealthy, in their search after gold, have been deaf to the calls of friendship, and to the plaintive cry of distress. They have hardened and contracted their hearts, and repelled the most faithful from their side, until, in the midst of their glory, their pomp, and their riches, they are left without sympathy and love. In the days of their health and strength, they cared not for such blessings as these; but now, sickness and weakness having come, when alone in their chamber they suffer from intense pain, they need, but they cannot buy, the help of a true friend. What can their gold avail? They have long made it the

only ground of their hope ; but it has failed : and poor, while oppressed with wealth ; lonely, in the midst of the fawning deceivers who surround them ; wretched, miserable, and despised, they depart to their own place.

O, how different the experience of the child of God, when the time of his affliction has come ! He may be deprived of much that once ministered to his enjoyment ; the world may suppose him to be alone and extremely wretched ; but in uninterrupted communion with his God he is unspeakably blessed. Milton was thus blessed, when, from the fulness of his heart, he composed his last poem. What, though he was "old and blind !" What, though many regarded him as "smitten by God's frown," and forsook him when he needed most the sympathy of warm hearts ! He had all he wanted to satisfy his large desires in the presence and love of Jesus. Hear him as he tells of his rich experience :—

"Oh, merciful One !

When men are farthest, then Thou art most near ;

When friends pass by, my weakness shun,

Thy chariot I hear.

"Thy glorious face

Is leaning towards me ; and its holy light

Shines in upon my lonely dwelling-place,

And there is no more night.

* * * *

“ I have nought to fear :
This darkness is the shadow of Thy wing ;
Beneath it I am almost sacred ; here
Can come no evil thing.

“ Oh ! I seem to stand,
Trembling, where foot of mortal ne’er hath been,
Wrapp’d in the radiance of Thy sinless land,
Which eye hath never seen.

“ Visions come and go ;
Shapes of resplendent beauty round me throng ;
From angel-lips I seem to hear the flow
Of soft and holy song.

“ It is nothing now,
When heaven is opening on my sightless eyes,
When airs from paradise refresh my brow,
That earth in darkness lies.

“ In a purer clime
My being fills with rapture ; waves of thought
Roll in upon my spirit ; strains sublime
Break over me unsought.”

Great is the power of sympathy to relieve the minds of the distressed. What though we were separated from loved ones, by being incarcerated within a dungeon’s gloomy walls ! Their sympathy would reach and cheer us. It would quickly make its way through the intervening doors and walls ; and noiselessly, yet effectually, would change our dungeon into a palace, and our sorrows into satisfying joys.

Thus was the immortal dreamer strengthened in the Bedford jail. He knew that he was loved by the friends who helped him with their prayers, and this knowledge brought solace to his heart. But, above all, when he raised his thoughts to the love of Christ Jesus the Lord ; when he felt that he had the sympathy of his merciful High Priest ; when, aided by the indwelling Spirit, he thought of the pilgrimage to his home, and the glory which awaited him there, the dungeon could no longer oppress his noble, devoted soul : but, forgetful of the trials of life, and absorbed in his glorious theme, he advanced to the rest of God. Now, in the Interpreter's house, looking on the wonders that were there ; now, with the maidens, resting in their " beautiful " home, preparing for the conflicts of the way ; now, in the land of Beulah, where sounds most melodious fell on his listening ear, and foretastes of heavenly joy cheered his enraptured heart.

Take another illustration of the power of sympathy to cheer ; of the strength which faith in the presence and goodness of God is sure to impart. Afar from the dwellings of man, a traveller, both naked and wounded, lay down to die. Robbers had left him as he was, alone in the desert waste. There was no one near him, to speak a consoling word, or help him to a hospi-

table home ; and, giving himself up for lost, he turned his face to the ground. While he did so, he saw a delicate little flower, blooming in its loveliness alone. He gazed at it long, and hope came again to his heart. From thinking of nature, his thoughts turned to his God,—from the flower to Him who preserved it alive in its beauty ; and, while cheered by the thought that the presence, and power, and goodness of God were there, Mungo Park—for it was he—applied himself heartily to the journey before him, and at last found both safety and rest.

O, how comforting to know that our God is mindful of our wants ! that He does not overlook us amidst the millions dependent on His care ! He “is good to all : and His tender mercies are over all His works.” (Psalm cxlv. 9.) He careth for oxen, He feedeth the young ravens when they cry ; and, though “five sparrows” are “sold for two farthings, not one of them is forgotten before God.”

“ But saints are lovely in His sight,
He views His children with delight ;
He sees their hope, He knows their fear,
And looks and loves His image there.”

In our Friend and Brother, our merciful High Priest, sympathy for His suffering people abides in all its fulness. “ In all things it behoved Him

to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God." (Heb. ii. 17.) He knows what it is to suffer; to be hungry and cold, having no certain dwelling-place; to be tempted by devils and men, and persecuted even unto death; to have one of His disciples betray Him, another deny Him with an oath, and all forsake Him in the hour of peculiar need.

He knows how to feel for the distressed, and to share the burden of their grief. Affliction had come to the house where He had been so often entertained. His friend *Lazarus*, whom He tenderly loved, had been torn from his sisters' embrace by the hand of relentless death, and had now been in the grave three days. Day by day the bereaved ones expected Jesus, and wondered much why He who knew all their distress was so long in coming. Still they confided, though their confidence was sorely tried; and in the darkest hour of their sorrow, the Sun of righteousness arose with healing in His wings, scattering their darkness, and giving them to rejoice in the light of unspeakable joy.

He came when He was most needed, and when it was most for His Father's glory that He should appear. He groaned when He beheld the grief of the lonely mourners. *He mingled His*

tears with theirs. He stood by the grave, and with the authority of God exclaimed, "Lazarus, come forth." It was enough. In the place of the spirits departed, Lazarus heard and obeyed. His soul came again to the poor, inanimate clay ; and majestically he arose from his bed in the silent tomb, to show forth the praise of his God.

What more do we need to assure us of the sympathy of Jesus ? of His ability and willingness "to wipe away His mourners' tears," and to bind up the broken heart ? And is He near, who redeemed us with His blood ? Does He make all our bed in our sickness, and surround us with His arms of love ? Does He regulate our sorrows and pains, that there may not be one too much ? and will he finally deliver us from all ? Then let us "trust Him for all, praise Him for all, and love Him for all ;" and, upheld by the power of grace, we shall rise to the glory prepared, and see the Redeemer as He is. "The sun shall be no more thy light by day ; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee : but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down ; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself : for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended." (Isaiah lx. 19, 20.)

CHAPTER VII.

"And to Godliness Brotherly Kindness."

HE who is an enemy to God cannot be a lover of his race. When men deny the existence, or are regardless of the claims, of Him to whom they are under so many obligations, the result of their ungodliness is a worship of self, and an indifference to the wants of man. The heart, uninfluenced by the love of Jesus, becomes yet more and more contracted, until there is no room in it for disinterested love, or even pity for humanity in distress.

How different the effect when a soul "consciously believes," and worships the infinite and eternal Spirit "in spirit and in truth!" When the fear of God is ever before our eyes, when the love of Jesus is in our hearts, we feel ourselves bound by innumerable ties of gratitude, as well as by the will of our gracious God, to show forth the Saviour's praise. "This commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." (1 John iv. 21.) But His "yoke is

easy, and" His "burden is light." "His commandments are not grievous." "The love of Christ constraineth us ;" so that while to us, who have attained unto godliness, it is necessary, it is also easy and delightful, to add to it brotherly kindness, or kindness for the children of God. "Every one that loveth Him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of Him;" (1 John v. 1 ;) the natural result of which is, that we prize the communion of God's children, and, in order to be benefited thereby, cast in our lot among them.

There are some, indeed, who profess to have union with Christ, while they refuse to unite themselves with any portion of His people : but we confess that to us their piety appears strange ; altogether unlike that of St. Paul, who, as soon as he could, "assayed to join himself to the disciples." (Acts ix. 26.)

We would not dogmatically say, that all who refuse to unite with the visible church are not members of the mystical body of Christ. Far be it from us to assert, that no one without Christian communion can journey in safety to the better land. But of one thing we are sure, that he who despises or neglects it deprives himself of many privileges ; and so exposes himself, unnecessarily, to the attack of the united powers of earth and hell, as greatly to imperil his soul.

"Two are better far than one
For counsel or for fight :
How can one be warm alone,
Or serve his God aright ?
Join we then our hearts and hands ;
Each to love provoke his friend ;
Run the way of His commands,
And keep it to the end.

"Woe to him whose spirits droop,
To him who falls, alone !
He has none to lift him up,
To help his weakness on :
Happier we each other keep ;
We each other's burdens bear ;
Never need our footsteps slip,
Upheld by mutual prayer."

"By the intercourse of friends of congenial minds, knowledge is communicated from the more to the less intelligent : animation, encouragement, and courage, from the lively and sanguine to the dull, the timid, and the gloomy : caution, wisdom, and modesty, from the more to the less prudent and discreet : and exhilaration from the joyful to the sad. Hence, then, the necessity and advantage of Christian fellowship and religious friendship ; and I seriously and earnestly advise all young converts to cultivate it."*

Our love for the brethren must not, however, be confined to our own particular portion of the

* James's "Christian Progress."

Christian church : it must include in its wide embrace all who are the children of God, by whatever name they are called, or in whatever position they are placed. We must love them "with a pure heart, fervently ;" with a holy, genuine, constant, strong affection, such as "many waters cannot quench ;" but which, ever burning in our hearts, will enable us to make any sacrifice for their temporal and eternal good.

Whether we remember it or not, the world are keen observers of the conduct of the Lord's people. They know how a Christian should continually behave ; the spirit in which he should engage in all the duties of life, and the love which he ought to show to his brethren and sisters in Christ. If we err in the least, if anything contrary to love is observed in our words or looks, the world takes knowledge of the fact, and publishes the matter abroad as an apology for its own sin : but if in all our transactions with those who are one with us in Christ brotherly kindness is seen,—hate us as they will, the world must feel the influence of our holy life. They must acknowledge that we have been with Jesus, that the spirit of our Master is our own ; and they will be constrained to say, as many have been in the past, "See how these Christians love one another."

There is great need, even for the sake of the ungodly, that this brotherly kindness should be shown. Selfishness everywhere reigns; and, hence, there are envy and strife, contentions in the family or with friends, and wars between the nations of the earth: brother rising up against brother, imbruing his hands in his blood; countries laid waste by the sword; homes, once happy, rased even to the ground; and widows and orphans, in nakedness, hunger, and cold, driven to wander over the earth. How shall these things be changed, if Christians do not live as they ought? How shall the mass be saved from corruption, if the savour of the salt be not preserved? How shall the darkness be dispelled, and knowledge, holiness, and bliss become the portion of the children of men, if Christians do not shine for God?

In the world and the church, the love in the heart must appear in the action of life, that all men may know that we are indeed the disciples of Christ. We must see that our hearts are enlarged; and that, free from the bigotry which would exclude from the life of God all who are not followers of us, we can join in the noble prayer, "Grace be with all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." What though they differ from us in many things not essential

to the Gospel of Christ? If they prove, by obedience to His law, that they love Him, that they have embraced Him as their Hope and Life, and that their hearts are indeed changed, let us love them, and help them as we can. "As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." (Gal. vi. 10.)

It would greatly conduce to the increase of this brotherly love, if Christians of different denominations more frequently met for Christian communion and prayer. If we but seldom come together and converse about the things in which we are agreed, we shall be in danger of mutual estrangement, and may even be tempted to think that there are few, if any, of the children of God, beyond the pale of our own church. But if we meet and converse on the things which belong to our peace, if we bow together at the throne of our Father in heaven, and pour out our hearts before Him, we shall know and appreciate each other in a way we could not otherwise do; and, while retaining our distinctive doctrines and forms of worship, shall strengthen each other's hands in the Lord, and glorify His holy name. Are we convinced of this? Do we see what a desirable and practical thing it is? Then no fear of losing our status in society should

keep us from commingling with our brethren in Christ.

The church to which we belong may, in the eyes of the world, be more respectable and influential than some other churches of the land ; and we, as individual Christians, may have peculiar privileges which our brethren of other Protestant denominations do not enjoy. Or it may be just the reverse : our brethren may have the place of worldly honour, while we are neglected or despised ; and they may have many peculiar means of grace with which we are not favoured. But what of that ? There is the greater need that we should feel for and help each other, in accordance with the will of God. While our Heavenly Father has distributed His gifts, as, in His unerring wisdom, He has deemed right, it is not that the strong should neglect the weak, but "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ : till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ : that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive ; but speaking the truth in love, may grow

up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ : from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." (Eph. iv. 12—16.)

To dwell more fully on the way in which our love should be shown : Surely there is need, when the world hates the people of God so much, when they would, if possible, drive them from the earth, that, regarding the disciples of Christ as very dear to Him, and as peculiarly related to ourselves, we should assist to supply their various temporal wants.

It pleaseth the Lord, for their own and for our good, that many of His people should be poor, having scarcely the necessities of life ; that many, for weeks or months, should be confined to a sick-bed, deprived of the public means of grace ; and that many should remove from their home and their friends, to serve Him in inhospitable climes. And shall we selfishly neglect such as these ? While blessed with the good things of earth, while able to attend with delight the services of the sanctuary of God, and while enjoying the pleasures of home, shall we be unmindful of the wants of the poor, the

afflicted, and the stranger? Shall we leave them in their trials, without the sympathy of man? Shall we abandon them to be a prey to the many temptations that assail them? Nay, rather, as the children of God, let us *seek them*, and offer them our aid; that, when the great white throne shall appear, and we shall stand before the Lord Jesus to be judged, we may hear the words which will make us for ever blessed: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." (Matt. xxv. 40.)

If our bodies are so regarded by the Lord, how precious must our souls be in His sight! and how important for us, therefore, to care for our spiritual life; to do what we can for the preservation of "the household of faith" from sin and the torments of hell!

Especially we should care for those who are babes in Christ. There are some who unwisely suppose, that when children profess to experience the life of God, they should for a time be left to themselves. They look with the sceptic's eye upon efforts to convert the young. They think that young people of ten or twelve years are unable to feel sorrow for sin, that "godly sorrow" which "worketh repentance unto life." The children may appear in great distress, while ministers, or

otherservants of God, direct them to Christ for relief, and their sorrow may be deep and real : but these doubters suppose that it is not ; that it is only the effect of sympathy with the anxiety of friends in their behalf. And when at last they are enabled to believe in Jesus, and feel that they are the children of God, when, by their words, and their looks of joy, they show that they are happy in His love, these old professors, so wise in their own eyes, shake their heads, and turn away. "Wait," they say : "time will reveal how satisfactory are our reasons for doubt. Leave them for awhile to themselves, and they will soon appear as they were, in the lightness and trifling, the folly or sin, of youth."

For want of sufficient care, some of these helpless ones may perish. But of whom will God require their blood? Will it not be from those whose hearts were unfeeling towards the babes in Christ, and who treated them with coldness and neglect, until spiritual life was extinct? If there is one who requires our brotherly love, it is he who, while yet young, is trying to live to God. Ignorant of the enemy's wiles, he may be tempted to cast his confidence away. Weak of himself—O, how weak!—he is peculiarly liable to fall. Hovering, perhaps, between spiritual life and death, he requires the warmth of love, and the nourishment of "the milk of the word," until, his early trials being past,

he may grow to a perfect man, to the fulness of the stature of Christ Jesus the Lord. Soon, if he is cared for as he ought to be, the days of his weakness will end ; and, instead of requiring help, he will himself be strong to "support the weak," and to strengthen the feeble in mind. With joy he will help to bear the burden of the weary and faint ; and, victorious in the conflict against the powers of earth and hell, will glorify the name of the Lord.

In our brotherly kindness we must care for him, also, who has been "overtaken in a fault." Instead of branding him with the name of a hypocrite, because of his backsliding ; instead of treating him with that severity which tends only to destroy ; we that are spiritual should "restore such an one in the spirit of meekness," considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted. Especially, on the principle that "prevention is better than cure," if by any means we can discern the symptoms of spiritual decline, we should try to save souls from death. And are not these symptoms such as can easily be known ? When he whose conscience was tender, and who, fearing to offend God, abstained "from all *appearance* of evil," pleads for indulgence in things which, though seemingly harmless, are really full of danger to the soul, we may be sure that decline

has set in. When he who, at whatever cost, delighted to offer praise to the Lord, is unwilling to tell of the love of God in his heart, or to do for His sake anything that requires a sacrifice of ease, or money, or time, it is evident that disease has advanced. When, if speaking at all on the things which belong to his peace, he continually laments his leanness, and wishes—only wishes—to be good, we may be sure that he is nigh unto death. Then comes the last stage, preceding backsliding in life, or a fall into open sin, neglect of those means of grace which once he delighted to attend, but which, because they lay open his heart, he is wholly unable to bear.

Now, what is our duty, if any of those symptoms appear in any whom we watch over in love? Shall we wink at a brother's fault, or even speak words which may lead him to think better of his state than is just? Nay, rather, let us watch for his soul as they that must give an account. With tenderness and love let us faithfully remind him of what he was, and of what God would have him to be. Let us lead him to see both the nature and extent of his disease, and *then* direct his thoughts to the cure; that, remembering from whence he has fallen, and with sorrow of heart doing his first works,—returning to Christ with faith and in a contrite spirit,—he may have his backslidings healed.

Closely connected with this labour of love, is the concealing a brother's faults, as long as we conscientiously can. In some cases, indeed, they may be of such a character that it is necessary for the purity of the church, that they should be made known, and the offender be brought to trial; and, if he refuse to repent and amend, that he should even be put away. But, in other cases, private admonition, or at least ministerial admonition, may suffice. Whatever we do, therefore, let us not publish a brother's failings abroad. If offences come, why should they come by us? If, conscious of our own imperfections and consequent liability to err, we desire to conceal those failings in ourselves which we are trying to mend, and wish our brethren to cover with the cloak of love, if ever they meet their eye, why should we not thus deal with others? Why not continually endeavour to walk by the important rule, "Of the dead and the absent say nothing but what is good?" We should give no encouragement by our example to the mischievous talebearer. In our *family circle*, as well as in the company of the wicked, we should keep our mouth as with a bridle, and carefully preserve the character of the children of God.

But what if we suppose that a brother has treated us ill? that his words and actions have

been contrary to the spirit of love? His seeming or real neglect has greatly grieved us; but, the more we brood over the wrong, the more we are alienated in heart, until, when we meet him again, he can see our displeasure in our looks. Now, what if he is innocent of the fault which we have laid to his charge? Will he not be astonished at the change in us? May not our chilling words, or our partly averted looks, be to him an occasion of stumbling, until, if no explanation take place, the enemy may sever and destroy the souls which were once united in love?

Granted that, in a moment of unwatchfulness, he has done you hurt, and that you have it in your power now to avenge the wrong. Beware of Satan's devices. Return not evil for evil.

“ Though justice be thy plea, consider this—
That in the course of justice none of us
Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy;
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
The deeds of mercy.

* * * * *

All the souls that are were forfeit once,
And He who might the vantage best have took
Found out the remedy. How would you be,
If He, who is the top of judgment, should
But judge you as you are? Oh! think on that,
And mercy then will breathe within your lips,
Like man new-made.”

He who is intimately acquainted with the human heart, and who knows our liability to err, warns us against an unforgiving spirit. He tells us of the punishment inflicted on a servant who, after his own great debt had been fully and freely forgiven by his merciful lord, mercilessly cast his fellow-servant into prison, because he was unable to pay him a paltry sum : how "his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. *So likewise,*" says Jesus, "*shall My heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.*" (Matt. xviii. 34, 35.)

It will be, therefore, at the peril of our souls, if we cherish a relentless spirit. The fact that we had obtained pardon would not save us from the punishment of such aggravated guilt ; for, much as God loves us while we cleave to Christ and walk in the Spirit, His wrath would, in the case supposed, wax hot against us, until in His fury we should be consumed.

"Blessed are they that do His commandments." And thus saith the Lord, "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." (Matt. xviii. 15.) Keep not in your breast the fire which would consume yourself, but speak to him of the

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wrong he has done. Seek an explanation as soon as you possibly can ; but *seek it alone*. Go with a heart prepared, filled with humility and love ; and, distrustful of yourself, but expecting the help of grace, address him in the spirit of your Lord. It may be that your accents of love will fall on a listening ear, and find a ready way to his heart. It may be that he will acknowledge the wrong,—if a wrong has at all been done,—and then, instead of his being changed into a cruel and implacable foe, you will rescue his soul, and make him your fast friend. Heart will be bound to heart by undying love, and the unity of the church will be strengthened, increased, and preserved.

Where is the man whose soul glows with love to Jesus, that does not desire such unity as this ? This is what we need. Unity we must have and retain, if our conquests are to be many and great. The world, now basely enslaved, has yet to be won to the obedience of Jesus Christ. But “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and *watching thereunto with all perseverance*

and supplication for all saints." (Eph. vi. 12, 13, 18.)

Living thus, we shall advance our Redeemer's kingdom in the hearts of the children of men, and shall hasten the time when heaven will resound with the song, "Hallelujah ! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

CHAPTER VIII.

"And to Brotherly Kindness Charity."

WE come to the highest and most important grace to which we are exhorted to attain : "the bond of perfectness," charity that embraces mankind, love like the love of Christ. To the end that we may have clear ideas of the nature of this Christian grace, and may seek and obtain this precious gift of the Lord, it is necessary for us to examine the model as seen in our Saviour's life.

"The image of Christ, drawn by the pencil of the Spirit, to which Scripture directs our aims, is painted in such colours, that it is impossible often to contemplate it without its irresistibly affecting the heart. As the bodily eye that has looked long at the sun retains a bright image of it, so the spiritual eye, that gazes steadfastly upon the face of Christ, is filled with light. We carry this image with us wherever we go, and it blends itself with all our thoughts and actions. It never ceases to be a study to us, ever growing more bright and beautiful as we gaze upon it, revealing

in contrast, more and more, the darkness of our own hearts. . . . The longer we contemplate Christ, the more do we discover how unlike Him we are, how selfishness has penetrated our inmost nature, how poor we are in humility, in love. When we enter this school of discipline, it does not seem so. This beholding ourselves in the image of Christ has the peculiarity, that whilst we more and more discover the darkness in us, upon us ; all the while . . . it is pouring its light. Paul has expressed this in a particularly rich passage in his second letter to the Corinthians. He says, 'But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' A wonderfully rich saying, indeed. Just as when we behold ourselves in a metallic mirror, he would say, it spreads over us its own effulgence ; so we Christians, looking with unveiled face at Christ, as into the mirror of true humanity, are adorned with His light, made partakers of His Spirit, changed as from glory to glory into the same resplendent image." *

Directing our thoughts to His love, as manifested to His creature man, we find that it included the evil and unthankful, his enemies, the vilest of the

* Tholuck.

vile. There was nothing in man to recommend him to the favour of God. He had nourished and brought us up, and we had rebelled against Him. We had chosen the service of His enemy in preference to serving Him. Instead of being freemen, blessed with the favour of God, we were enslaved by our cruel foe, and exposed to eternal death. Lying in our sins and blood, in the depths of "a horrible pit," and in the filth of "the miry clay," guilty, depraved, and undone, we deserved to be consumed. But, while God in His mercy willed to redeem us from death,

" With pitying eyes, the Prince of Peace
Beheld our helpless grief ;
He saw, and—O, amazing love !
He flew to our relief."

Sweeter than the song of angels the voice of the Saviour was heard, "Lo, I come (in the volume of the Book it is written of Me,) to do Thy will, O God." (Heb. x. 7.)

Nor was the Saviour's love one which cost Him no sacrifice ; for it led Him to deny and to humble Himself, and to submit to a violent and cruel death. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." (2 Cor. viii. 9.) Born in a stable, and laid in a manger, He lived with-

out the riches of earth that we might have the riches of His grace. Though He was "in the form of God," and "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," He "made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Philip. ii. 6—8.)

Observe how His love for man led Him to be forgetful of Himself. He sat upon Jacob's well, in need of refreshment and rest: but a woman, sinful and ignorant, drew near, and, in pity for her perishing soul, the Saviour addressed her. What though he had but one solitary hearer, and His weary frame required repose? the woman was in danger of death, and Jesus endeavoured to save her. Bearing with her ignorance, He patiently taught her the way of life and peace. He reproved her of sin, aroused her conscience, and then revealed to her soul that He Himself was the Christ of God, till, feeling her need, and believing on her merciful Lord, she drank the water of life.

Behold Him again while His enemies nail Him to the tree. Unfeeling in heart, they drive the nails through His hands and His feet, and the bleeding Redeemer is filled with excruciating pain: but, forgetful of Himself, and mindful of

the fact that they were exposed to the torments of hell, He raises His oppressed heart, and with earnestness prays that His murderers may have mercy from God. "Father," He cries, "forgive them ; for they know not what they do." (Luke xxiii. 34.) They hear, but they care not for His prayers. They see Him on the cross who lived but for the good of man. They know that His suffering is great, but they will not let Him die in peace. They mock Him, they wag their heads, they try to increase His pain ; but the love of Jesus does not fail. He could readily have called legions of angels to His relief ; but how then could sinners be saved ? If His blood were not permitted to flow, how could His murderers be cleansed ? where could they find safety and rest ? He knew them, though they knew not themselves : their vileness and guilt, their danger and helplessness, appealed to the pity of His heart ; and, to the last, He sought to convert them.

"*Beginning at Jerusalem,*" were His gracious words to His apostles, when He sent them forth on their embassy of grace, after He had risen triumphantly from the dead. The men of Jerusalem were His murderers, men who with wicked hands had crucified and slain Him ; but their need was the greater, their danger was the more imminent,

because of the greatness of their guilt ; and the Friend of sinners, in mercy, would rescue them from eternal woe.

"Beginning at Jerusalem." We can imagine the surprise of His apostles, while they listened to these strange words ; for they knew not as yet the pity which dwelt in the Saviour,—the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of His love. We think we hear them say in reply, "After all they have done against Thee, wilt Thou think of them and pity them still ? Send us to Galilee, send us wherever we can have a hope of success ; but send us not to these, whose hearts are like the nether millstone, whose hands are dyed with Thy blood, and whose exceeding guilt crieth for the swift vengeance of God."

"Beginning at Jerusalem," O fathomless depth of mercy and redeeming grace ! As if the Redeemer had said, "Vile as they are, much as they deserve to die, go and assure the sinners of Jerusalem of My love. Say to those who so loudly cried, 'Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him, crucify Him,' that I invite them to Myself that they may live. Find, if you can, the soldiers who nailed Me to the cross, and him who pierced Me with his spear, and tell them—it may be that they will hear—that the hands which they pierced are yet stretched out to receive them ; and that—

My 'side an open fountain is,
Where all may freely go,
And drink the living streams of bliss,
And wash them white as snow.' "

Such is the self-denying, self-forgetting, never-failing love which Jesus showed, even to the most unworthy. And can love such as this be obtained and be manifested by man? Can we in whom, before we found peace with God, dwelt anger, hatred, and revenge, attain to this holy state, wherein—no matter how we are tried—nothing but love shall ever arise in our hearts? It is only on earth, and while we mingle with men, that we can show such charity as this; for in heaven there will be no one to require pity, no one to be sought and saved. And although man cannot reach this state unaided by the power of God, yet if it is the will of God that we should thus be holy in His sight, surely He can accomplish even this.

Now, that this is the will of God is evident from such exhortations as these: "Be ye therefore followers" (imitators) "of God, as dear children; and *walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us.*" (Eph. v. 1, 2.) "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger,

feed him ; if he thirst, give him drink : for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." (Rom. xii. 19, 20.) "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you ; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven : for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." (Matt. v. 44, 45.) Yet, further, observe, that in order that we should be thus like Him in love, He has raised up ministers for His church. 'And He' (Jesus) 'gave some, apostles ; and some, prophets ; and some, evangelists ; and some, pastors and teachers ; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ : till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, *unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.*" (Eph. iv. 11—13.) Each of us may truly say,—

"He wills that I should holy be ;
What can withstand His will ?
The counsel of His grace in me
He surely shall fulfil."

Ready as Satan is to fill every vacancy of the soul with what is like himself, yet, *if we are filled with all the fulness of God*, where shall he find

place for sin? A room which is filled with the light of the sun can have in it no darkness at all; and the heart which is filled with all the fulness of God can have in it nothing unholy or impure. For this fulness the apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Ghost, pleads in behalf of the children of God; (see Eph. iii. 19;) and, as certainly as "He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit," because "He maketh intercession for the saints, *according to the will of God,*" our God will not withhold this inestimable blessing, the fulness of perfect love, from any who seek it in His own appointed way.

We must seek it earnestly, and by the exercise of living faith on the Lord Jesus. "Blessed are they which do *hunger* and *thirst* after righteousness; for they shall be filled." (Matt. v. 6.) Intensity of desire, however, will not, of itself, avail. By faith, and by faith alone, we must gain this height of perfection. We "live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved" us, "and gave Himself for" us; (Gal. ii. 20;) and by the same trust of the heart we advance onward to God, daily adding grace to grace, till we receive this which gives perfection to the rest, the fulness of Divine love.

Hungering and thirsting after righteousness, we must give ourselves wholly to God, to be

perfectly conformed to His image, and to do and suffer His will. We must ask for the blessing in the name of Jesus, *believing that while we ask we receive*, for the sake of the atoning blood ; and soon we shall experience its satisfying fulness in our hearts. "All things are possible to him that believeth." (Mark ix. 23.) "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire," in accordance with the will of God, "when ye pray, *believe that ye receive them*, and ye shall have them." (Mark xi. 24.)

Instances have not been wanting of persons enjoying this "boundless charity Divine." Was it not this that led the prophet Jeremiah to say, "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people?" (Jer. ix. 1.) Did not St. Stephen enjoy it while, even as they stoned him to death, "he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge?"—no angry feelings or words, but love for his enemies moved the depths of his heart, leading him fully to forgive, and to pray, as did Jesus his Lord, that they might obtain the mercy of God. To pass over the thousands of noble confessors and martyrs who, in all the suffering which they endured, showed that this love was felt by them,—is it,

not this that constrains the missionary to leave his home and his friends, to go to a land of which it may be truly said, that

“Dangers uncounted are clustering there ;
The pestilence stalks uncontroll’d ;
Strange poisons are borne on the soft balmy air,
And lurk in each leaf’s fragrant fold !”

He is exposed to perils, not only from pestilential vapours, but also from fiend-like men, who repay evil for good. But the more degraded they are, the more he pities them ; and, constrained by the love of Christ, he is able to love them even unto death. This is the secret of his holy, quenchless zeal : he has been with Jesus, and the fulness of the Saviour’s love is his strength. “Ingratitude, and failure, may chill the philanthropy that looks only to man for its reward : but he who, like Howard, kindles his torch at the flames of the sacrifice on Golgotha, and opens his heart to the ingushings of Divine love, may carry that torch, with unwasted brilliancy, and even with still-augmented brightness, through all the fierce blasts of human scorn and ingratitude, and down into the darkest, dampest recesses, where human wickedness and misery assume their most revolting and loathsome forms.”*

Nor is this wondrous grace the exclusive privi-

* Dr. Williams’s “Religious Progress.”

lege of those who minister in the Word. Many of the Lord's poor, many a hardy labourer, whose rough exterior gives no indication of the priceless treasure in his soul, experiences the fulness of love. "Two men were working together in a mine; and having prepared to blast the rock, and laid the train, the latter became by accident ignited. In a few moments a tremendous explosion they knew was inevitable, and the rock must be rent in a thousand pieces. On perceiving their danger, they both leaped into the bucket, and called to the man on the surface to draw them up. He endeavoured to do so; but his arm was found too feeble to raise the bucket while both the men were in it. What was to be done? The burning fuse, which could not be extinguished, was now within a short distance of the powder; a moment or two and the explosion must take place. At this awful crisis, one of the men, addressing the other, said, 'You shall live, and I will die: for you are an impenitent sinner, and if you now die your soul will be lost; but if I die, I know that, by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, I shall be taken to Himself.' And so saying, without waiting for a reply, he leaped out of the bucket, and prayerfully awaited the result. The other reached the surface safely, and bent over the shaft to ascertain the fate of his companion. At that

moment a terrific explosion was heard ; a portion of the rock was thrown up, and smote him on the forehead, leaving an indelible mark to remind him of his danger and deliverance. But the man of God, when they came to search for him, was found arched over by the fragments of broken rock in the mine, uninjured, and rejoicing in the Lord. This magnanimous miner exhibited in this act an amount of disinterested love and charity which has seldom been equalled, and is never found but in connection with the love of Christ. Here is none of that unholy daring of which we have instances among the heroes of Greece and Rome, who, actuated solely by a love of notoriety, inflicted upon themselves tortures, and even death ; but that pure Christian character, which, at all hazards, even at the sacrifice of life itself, seeks to save the immortal soul of man." *

The blessing is ours through the blood of Jesus, and we have the greatest encouragement to advance to the enjoyment of it now ; for, thus saith the Lord, "If ye do these things,"—if thus you endeavour to "make your calling and election sure,"—"ye shall never fall : for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Peter i. 10, 11.)

* Speech of the Rev. R. Young.

Here is that which will indeed satisfy the wants of the soul ! here is a glorious hope to cheer the fainting spirit of the saint, and to incite him to be valiant for God ! It is not only, Ye shall never eternally perish, ye shall never finally fall ; but,—more, much more,—Ye shall never fall into sin, into that which is evil and accursed. Stumbling-blocks may be laid in your way, and earth may combine with hell to pull you down ; but, while you "press toward the mark for the prize of your high calling in Christ Jesus," all their efforts will be vain. Clothed with the armour of God, and strong in your Captain's might, you will fight and continually prevail. And when your conflicts have come to an end, when at the call of your Saviour you go to the rest He has prepared, yours will be a triumph from the Lord : victorious over death and the grave, angels and friends will welcome your spirit to its home ; and yours will be a crown, the bright crown of life, which, receiving from Jesus, you will cast with adoration at His feet.

"Yes, the prize shall then be given,
We His open face shall see ;
Love, the earnest of our heaven,
Love, our full reward shall be ;
Love shall crown us
Kings through all eternity !"

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